A MAP OF
TYRRHENE
Monte S. Giuliano (ERYX)
Golfo di Castellammare
M. Pellegrino
PALERMO
Capo Zafferano
Bagheria
Trapani
Castellammare
Partinico
Solanto
Alcamo
Termini Himera
Calatafimi
EGADIAN Is.
MOTYE
Marsala (LILYBAEUM)
Salemi
Corleone
Partanna
Castelvetrano
S. Carlo
Mazzara
SELINUNTE
Sciacca
Racalmuto
AFRICAN
SEA
Canicatti
GIRGENTI
Porto Empedocle
HARRY MORLEY & A.E. TAYLOR 26

SICILY

Ia LIPARI
Capo Peloro
Scilla
SEA
Milazzo
MESSINA
Villa S.Gio.
Barcellona
Reggio
Cefalù
Mistretta
C.po S.Alessio
C.Mola
Taormina
Monti Madonie
Troina
Bronte
Giardini
C.Schiso (NAXOS)
Nicosia
Agira
Adernò
Aci Reale
Isole Ciclopi
Aci Castello
Leonforte
ENNA (Castrogiovanni)
Paterno
CATANIA
S.Cataldo
Caltanissetta
Piazza
Mazzarino
Riesi
Lentini
Augusta
Caltagirone
MEGARA
Sortino
C.S Panagia
Vizzini
Buccheri
R. Anapo
Siracusa
R. Gela
GELA (Terranova)
Palazzolo (AKRAE)
Plemmyrion
Canicattini
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Noto
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CITIES OF SICILY

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THE MASTIFF OF RIMINI

TRAVEL

CITIES OF UMBRIA
FLORENCE AND NORTHERN TUSCANY
COUNTRY WALKS ABOUT FLORENCE
THE VALLEY OF ARNO
SIENA AND SOUTHERN TUSCANY
A WAYFARER IN UNKNOWN TUSCANY
ROME
NAPLES AND SOUTHERN ITALY
MILAN AND LOMBARDY
ROMAGNA AND THE MARCHES
VENICE AND VENETIA
THE PAGEANT OF VENICE
RAVENNA
CITIES OF SPAIN
HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS IN SOMERSET
HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS IN WILTSHIRE
A BOOK OF THE WYE
ENGLAND OF MY HEART

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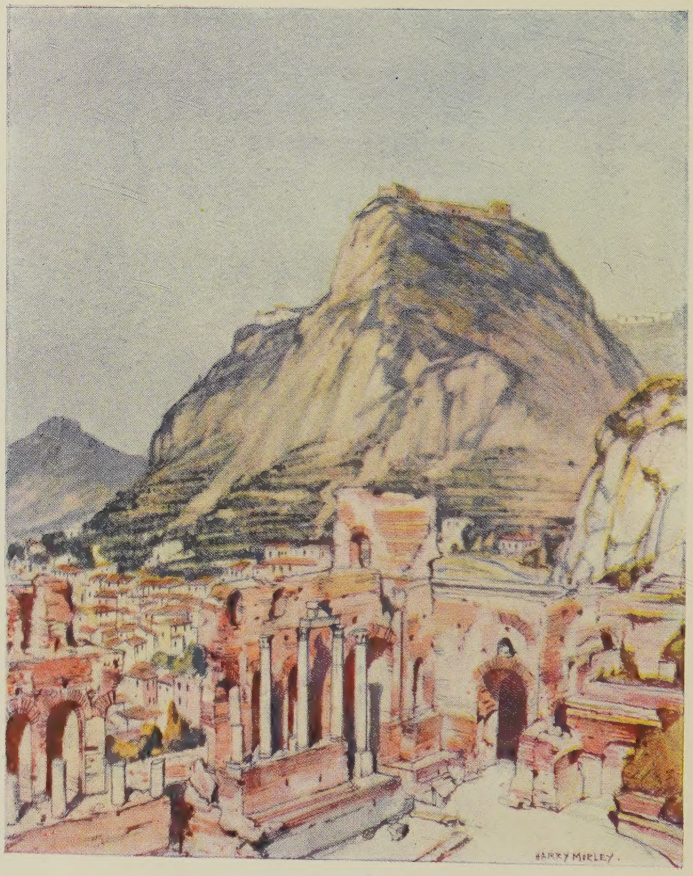

TAORMINA

CITIES OF SICILY

BY

EDWARD HUTTON

WITH 12 ILLUSTRATIONS IN
COLOUR BY
HARRY MORLEY
14 OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS AND A MAP

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To

MY WIFE

CHARLOTTE HUTTON

TO WHOM I OWE THE CHIEF HAPPINESS

OF MY LIFE

—

IN TOTO CORDE MEO

June 18, 1926

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* *Photographs by Crupi.* † *Photographs by Alinari.*

CITIES OF SICILY

CHAPTER I

MESSINA

THERE might seem to be little or nothing to see at Messina, since the earthquake of 28th December, 1908, which in the early morning, long before light, in some thirty seconds destroyed the whole city, and more than 84,000 of its 120,000 inhabitants. Such a disaster, so far beyond the utmost ferocity of man, in its quite final achievement at any rate, in its suddenness if not in its imbecility, appals one, and, I suppose, attracts one to the spot, in spite of the fact, which, from any human point of view only makes the catastrophe more tragic, that Messina had no more to do with it than has the sailor with the tempest that destroys his ship. He too must suffer the acts of nature with a modicum of the same stolidity as Messina has shown, and like her, not once nor twice, begin anew.

In Naples they regard things differently. For they declare that Messina suffered because she had not loved her Madonna enough.[1] So the companions of Odysseus hereabout were drowned for paying too little attention to

[1] It would be very strange that the people of Messina should not love their Madonna, for it was to them she is said to have written the only letter we hear of from her hand. This letter was preserved in the Cathedral where, under the baldachin, was the ancient picture of the "Madonna of the Letter" attributed to S. Luke. The letter was written in Hebrew on the occasion of the conversion of the Messenians by S. Paul, who is said to have translated it into Greek.

Helios Hyperion, then the God of these shores. Would they were right! So might we avoid such chaos as this, taking heaven by prayer or violence. But the forces of nature, as unaware of man as they are certainly indifferent to him, involve him in their unknowable business to his wholesale undoing. Nor is this, their latest and worst, their only effort, here in Messina.

In the year 1783 on the 5th February Messina had been destroyed with its inhabitants by earthquake: an awful business, but a mere rehearsal of what was to happen in 1908. These Polyphemic and grotesque forces have not yet met their Odysseus: it might appear unlikely they will ever do so. Yet, in the womb of time, perhaps he lies, and of our race, who shall enslave them, and they shall serve him and do his bidding. When that time comes we shall have avenged—alas, poor souls!—our comrades slain.

Yes, something like that, some dumb resentment—against what, against whom?—stirs in the heart as you wander to-day amid what is still the débris, though tidied up. That monstrous cathedral gapes and proclaims that the gods were not accountable—sinned against, not sinning: *Θεῶν ἀέκητι ἀνάκτων*. In ignorance men built within a curved line of earth fracture, following an arc drawn from a centre in Stromboli, within which, we are told, the earth is gradually sinking and is in an unstable condition. The earthquakes of 1693, 1783, might seem like broad hints—not broad enough. Those gallant fools rebuilt Messina and inhabited it, and their descendants, what is left of them, after a more terrible experience, are doing the same.

How admirable that is!—as much in its patience as in its courage. It should even reconcile one to what is being built, so sturdily, if without the old effect of beauty, along that haughty sea-front. It was, after all, a ramshackle city that sprang up after 1783, top-heavy and without foundations. To-day they thrust downward, till like an oak Messina shall have as much beneath as above ground. I wonder if with any better success. That curved line of earth fracture. . . . Far off be that day!

But a morning was enough, for me at any rate. The new buildings, a whole street of them, even more than that ghastly cathedral, those gaping walls, the whole rickety ruin, inhuman and unbearable, destroyed all my pleasure in that incomparable site, the infinite beauty and variety of that noble shore upon the most famous strait in the world.

So, sometimes, I took to the sea and went sailing up the strait into the Tyrrhene along the Italian shore; or, sometimes, in the afternoon, I made my way, always by the shore, out beyond Messina, through village after village, past the sea lakes of Pantano where the shell-fish are so good fresh from the sea, to the Faro and Cape Peloro. Nothing else about Messina is half so fine as this road which begins by giving you the whole marvellous curve of the harbour, the famous sickle, which first named the place Zankle; and on the way offers you the majestic view of the strait, here less than three miles across from shining shore to shining shore. As you go forward you see them all, the towns and villages upon the Calabrian side, Reggio, Gallico and Villa San Giovanni, till Scilla comes in sight at the northern entrance of the strait, and, beyond Scilla, Bagnara and beyond again Palmi and Gioja till Capo Vaticano far stretched into the sunset closes the view. And behind these golden and embowered places rise the noble outlines and towered peaks of the barren Aspromonte.[1]

There at the Faro I would lie down on the pale sand strewn with the pumice-stone, fragments—for me—of the Clashing Rocks, with the Æolian Isles before me, mountains floating on that violet sea.

[1] Half-way between Messina and the Faro, on the Via Pompeia, is the village of Pace where was the church of "the Grotta." The interest of the place lies in this, that it is said to be the site of the "hollow cave" where Odysseus dragged up his ship when the wind obliged him to leave Messina:

"... We moored our well-built ship in the hollow harbour near a spring of sweet water (Messina) ... But when it was the third watch of the night and the stars had turned their course, Zeus, the cloud-gatherer, roused against us a fierce wind with a wondrous tempest ... and as soon as early Dawn appeared ... we dragged our ship and made her fast in a hollow cave where were the fair dancing-floors and seats of the nymphs."

It is a lonely shore for all its beauty. Not many, it seems, care for Scylla and Charybdis, or seek this place of the Fig Tree for the sake of Odysseus, or, here where the Tyrrhene and the Ionian meet, know this sea for what it is—the Cup of Homer.

How often have I lain there and at all hours, yet have always been alone! My frequent visits to this spot, together with my voyages with Alessandro and Pietro in that eyed boat of theirs, which was as nameless as Odysseus' ship, at all seasons and states of wind and tide, but most often in the early morning and at evening, have been made in the fond hope of seeing, of finding Charybdis. Just that wonder, so dear to Antiquity, I have never seen, but, in such a place, what others have I not surprised?

The Cup of Homer. . . . Yes, you may walk there for hours undisturbed on that pale sand, which divides the unharvested sea from a sea of wild flowers; or scarcely drifting in the current or the tide, or flying before the same wind out of the south that wrecked Odysseus, in the ever-changing light, or under Boötes or under Orion, that sea before you, understand perhaps for the first time the whole great story.

Here at least was the turning point, the crisis of those wanderings. Here, after many sorrows, many adventures, after losing all his other ships and finally all his comrades, he is at last left alone. Here in this strait divine Charybdis sucks down his broken ship, while he, like a bat, clings to the tall Fig Tree; and when she spews it forth again, mast and keel, he drops down on to the spars and alone rides out into the large.

That befell, the whole world has ever agreed, here in this strait. But I would ask myself or Alessandro or Pietro, who knew nothing about it, does not he say himself that all his adventures befell while he was exploring "the straits of the sea"—ὅσσ' ἐμόγησα πόρους ἁλὸς ἐξερεείνων?[1]

[1] *Odyssey* xii, 259. I know that many English translators have rendered πόρους ἁλὸς: the paths of the sea. I have always wondered what they meant. The word πόρος means literally a means of passing, e.g. a ford or ferry, and thus a strait, a way, a track, and secondarily a way or means of achieving. To translate πόρους

I used to think about that among the wild flowers at the Faro. There was always plenty of time before the tide turned and Charybdis, invisible at the moment, might be hoped for. Meanwhile the little goatherd on the shady side of the sand dunes piped sweetly.

Follow it for a moment. Odysseus when he missed Malea was making the difficult passage of the Strait of Cythera, the entrance from the well-known Ægean into the Ionian. That passage is to-day called the Elaphonisi Channel. So he began. Suppose that the Lotus Eaters dwelt in what we know as Tunisia: then the strait was either that of Tunis itself, or, more likely, of Jerba. The adventure of the Cyclops marked the passage between Ischia and Italy, if as I should maintain that adventure befell in the Phlegræan Fields; the encounter with Æolus, the passage between Sicily and the Æolian Isles. The horrible adventure with the Laestrygones, in which Odysseus lost all his ships save only his own, marked perhaps the passage between Corsica and Sardinia, while that with Circe befell in the shallow miasmic waters between the mainland of Italy and the Pontine Islands, of which steep Monte Circeo once formed a part. The Sirens would thus mark the passage between Capri and the headland of Sorrento, a place full in the face of the scirocco; and finally the tremendous double adventure of Scylla and Charybdis is the passage of the greatest and most important strait of all—the Strait of Messina.

This strait was the way from the Ionian into the Tyrrhene Sea.

When Odysseus passed or attempted to pass the Strait of Cythera he was, so far at any rate as he was concerned, in known waters, though it may be that for the Ægean civilization of which he is the representative adventurer, the Ionian was still something of a mystery. To pass from the Ionian into the Tyrrhene was to enter the unknown. It was no doubt a tremendous achievement for a Greek, and it is there that every adventure of Odysseus

ἀλὸς as "paths of the sea" is surely only accurate if it refers to the straits or perhaps the trade routes. It is, in any looser sense, merely rhetorical, since the sea has no paths.

takes place. In the Strait between the two seas the crisis of the story is reached.

Thence Odysseus is blown into faëryland, if you will, only not into fairyland. If, as has been maintained, Calypso's Isle lies in the Strait of Gibraltar between the Pillars of Herakles, we see Odysseus standing on the threshold of the ocean.

The poem thus becomes an account of the gateways, that is the Straits, of the Western Mediterranean : a gathering up of all that was known or might be overheard of that mysterious sea.

Overheard . . . Just there, maybe, we have the truth. I confess, after many wet miles of tramping in and out of the Messina Strait, after many hours with the *Odyssey* beside Charybdis and in sight of Scylla, I cannot any longer believe that Homer himself ever really saw this place. He heard the stories of the sailors, of sailors rather Phœnician than Greek, for the Greeks were always poor seamen, though not so poor as the Romans : he heard the stories of the sea as Shakespeare heard later the stories of Italy and Italian sunshine—even of Messina—about the Court or in the taverns of London, and both made immortal use of what they heard.

But what is it exactly that Homer tells us of these shores ?

Alessandro and Pietro who sail me up and down, in and out, of these Straits whenever I so desire—and that is as often as may be—know nothing of Odysseus, not even under his Latin pseudonym of Ulysses. The Madonna and the Reali di Francia are more in their line. Quite right. Happily they can neither read nor write. They are admirable sailors and have known all these waters from childhood, and vicariously, if you will consider it, through their ancestors for hundreds, perhaps thousands of years. They may be Sicani and Iberian, or Sikeli from Italy, or Phœnician or Greek or Saracen or Norman or all these combined, by origin ; but I like to think they derive from that band of pirates from Cyme in Opicia itself a colony of Chalcis of whom Thucydides speaks as having first founded the city of Zankle or Messina. They believe in marvels

but not my marvels. Still we have much in common. We have together visited every corner of these coasts, we have sailed as far as the Æolian Isles, as far as Naxos ruined in a lemon grove on a black tongue of lava thrust into the violet sea, for my part, in search of sea monsters and clashing rocks, but the only marvel they looked for was the Fata Morgana. As I said we had much in common.

They had seen that amazement and longed to show it to me. It seems that one morning they were lying off Reggio just after dawn. It was a dead calm and already hot, the tide or current on the turn up the strait but not yet really on the move. While they were fishing, suddenly Alessandro happened to look up and there in the sky he beheld a city far more glorious and splendid than the Messina he knew. Was it the Messina of long ago, that great Greek city he had heard of, established there for ever in the heavens and visible to him on that morning by a special grace of the Madonna? He crossed himself. To be thus blest! And shouting for joy, called upon Pietro to share the vision. And the brothers embraced and gazed upon that city not made with hands till it passed from their sight.

So, long ago, Father Angelucci saw the same glorious spectacle and left us the following account of it:

"On the fifteenth of August 1643 as I stood at my window I was surprised with a most wonderful, delectable vision. The sea that washes the Sicilian shore swelled up and became for ten miles in length like a chain of dark mountains; while the waters near our Calabrian coast grew quite smooth, and in an instant appeared as one clear polished mirror reclining against the aforesaid ridge. On this glass was depicted in *chiaroscuro* a string of several thousand pilasters, all equal in altitude, distance, and degree of light and shade. In a moment they lost half their height and bent into arcades like Roman Aqueducts. A long cornice was next formed on the top, and above it rose castles innumerable, all perfectly alike. These soon split into towers, which were shortly after lost in colonnades, then windows, and at last ended in pines, cypresses and other trees even and similar. This is the

Fata Morgana which for twenty-six years I had thought a mere fable."

This was what Alessandro and Pietro longed to show me, this is what they believed I sought as with the big chart on my knees and the *Odyssey* open beside me we sailed those seas.

Perhaps they were right, for assuredly what I sought remained a vision without tangible reality. The only Clashing Rocks I found, though indeed we sailed through and through the isles of Æolus, were strewn upon those unfrequented beaches—fragments of pumice-stone, that yet, in fact, when Odysseus sailed from Troy, may have been mighty rocks hurled forth by Stromboli or Vulcano to float wandering upon these waters, and, grinding and clashing together, may well have endangered a ship—even the " Argo " which, according to Apollonius Rhodius, the virgin daughters of Nereus like a school of dolphins, guided by Thetis, lifting the edge of their garments over their snow-white knees, bore up out of the sea and sent through the air over the waves and the clashing wandering rocks ; and round them the water spouted and foamed. So, a whole long day of springtime, they toiled, bearing the ship between the loud echoing rocks.

Nothing of this saw we for all our trouble : only the pumice-strewn beaches of silver, only the white feather of smoke over Vulcano, and the sea-birds, wheeling about us over the wine-faced sea, under the soft sky, with so infinite a grace that, for what I know, they may well have been those milk-white Nereids, who bore up the "Argo" into safety, while Hera threw her arms about Athena in fear as she gazed, for Jason was dear to her, so long ago.

Nor was I more fortunate with Scylla than with the Planctae and Charybdis.

Homer in the Twelfth Book of the *Odyssey* describes Scylla and Charybdis. He says the rock of Scylla reached with its sharp peak to the broad heaven and a dark cloud surrounded it. This never melted away, nor did clear sky ever surround that peak in summer or in harvest time. No mortal man could scale it or set foot upon the top,

not though he had twenty hands and feet ; for the rock was smooth, as if it were polished. And in the midst of the cliff was a dim cave, turned to the west, towards Erebus. Not even a man of might could shoot an arrow from the hollow ship so as to reach into that vaulted cave. Therein dwelt Scylla, yelping terribly. . . . But the other cliff was lower—they were close to each other ; Odysseus might even shoot an arrow across—and on it was a great fig tree with rich foliage, and beneath it divine Charybdis sucked down the black water.

Nothing really like this is to be seen to-day. To begin with, the strait at its narrowest is nowhere less than near two miles wide [1] ; but according to Homer's description, it was so narrow that not only could Odysseus shoot an arrow across it, but the spray of Charybdis "would fall on the tops of both cliffs." [2]

Again, the distance between Scylla and the Punta del Faro is three sea miles, that is, 6,080 yards, and between Scylla and the whirlpool of Charybdis rather more. In approaching Scylla, whether from Sicily or from Capo Vaticano, what you see is a bold headland thrust out, but not far, into the sea, its level top crowned by the great flat-roofed castle. The height of this promontory is not more than eighty metres. There is to-day no cave upon its western face half-way to the top—say 120 feet from the sea. If there were, even Paris, nay even Eros could easily shoot an arrow into it, while it would be beyond the power of glorious Odysseus himself to reach Scylla from Charybdis, even with his famous bow that no one but he could bend.

I have beaten about Scylla of the rock at all seasons and in all weathers. On one fortunate day I landed there upon the western base of the headland. When the north-west wind was blowing pretty lively, indeed in any wind, I have heard enormous roarings and voices, and sometimes strange howlings about the headland, but they were the

[1] 10,600 feet, or about one and three-quarters sea miles.

[2] *Odyssey*, xii, 239. How this could be, even though Scylla and Charybdis had been close together, I do not understand, since the cliff of Scylla was so high that it was always lost in the clouds even in full summer (*Od.* xii, 73–5).

innumerable voices of the sea and not the yelping of Scylla.

And yet . . . Alessandro and Pietro never liked the place ; they pointed to the teeth of the monster too often bared, through which the sea foamed, the long stretched reefs like reaching arms, and were glad to put out again into the large.

And yet . . . Fra Leo Alberti, writing in the sixteenth century, says : "Scylla hath a rock shaped like a man, surrounded by caves emitting howls of wolves and screams of beasts." And the Abbé Lazzaro Spallanzani, Fellow of the Royal Society and Professor of Natural History in the University of Pavia, writing at the end of the eighteenth century, declares he heard the same. "I proceeded," he says, "in a small boat to Scylla. This is a lofty rock distant twelve miles from Messina, which rises almost perpendicularly from the sea, on the shore of Calabria, and beyond which is the small city of the same name. Though there was scarcely any wind, I began to hear, two miles before I came to the rock, a murmur and noise like a confused barking of dogs, and on a nearer approach readily discovered the cause. This rock in its lower part contains a number of caverns ; one of the largest of which is called by the people *Dragara*. The waves when in the least agitated rushing into these caverns break, dash, throw up frothy bubbles and thus occasion these various and multiplied sounds." [1]

It may be so. But even though Spallanzani were right as to the origin of the noises he heard, it scarcely affects the description of Homer. If Homer is to be believed, enormous changes must have befallen this strait, and in fact we know this to be so. What precisely may have been the effect of the numberless earthquakes since Homer's day we have no means of knowing ; but we have records of what befell Scylla in the earthquake of 1783, and these are enough to explain our disillusion. That earthquake in fact changed the face of Scylla, which was wholly overthrown on the night of 5th February. Vast portions of the rock

[1] Abbé Lazzaro Spallanzani : *Travels in the Two Sicilies* (London, 1798). Vol. iv, 169 *et seq.*

and of the mountains above Scylla were thrown into the strait. One huge wave resulting from the convulsion swept over the strand of the bay and engulfed in one moment 2,475 human beings who had there taken refuge from the falling city.

"The walls and towers of the Castle were split asunder and overturned upon the town," we read; "the buildings below were crushed to atoms and one hundred and fifty persons perished in this fall. At night a considerable part of the inhabitants, chiefly of the class of sailors, followed the example of the Prince of Scilla and repaired to the beach; they there pitched tents, or lay down in their barks, hoping to pass the night in perfect security, at a distance from all buildings. The sky was bright and serene, the sea lulled in a profound calm, and all these poor people were indulging in sweet sleep, a short respite from their woes. In this treacherous state of things, a little after midnight, the whole promontory of Campala fell at once into the sea without any previous earthquake. The sea fled back before this mass towards the Golilla del Faro, where it carried off twenty-eight persons with their boats and houses; then returning with redoubled fury across its natural channel, flowed on the shore of Scylla thirty palms above its usual level and three miles along the coast. As it fell back again it swept away into the abyss 2,475 persons who were lying on the sands or in boats. . . ."[1]

Thinking of these things, how often at sunset have we come down the strait, back to Messina, Alessandro, Pietro and I. And as it so happened it was in coming thus back from Scylla on a clear summer evening that I was finally convinced that Homer himself never saw this strait, never sailed these seas or landed upon these divine shores: that all he wrote of them was from hearsay—those Phœnicians!—the gossip of the harbour or the coast, put to marvellous and immortal use. For there stood Etna with its crown of snow and great plume of smoke across the crimson sky. No one who had even seen Sicily, especially

[1] From a letter by an eye-witness quoted by H. Swinburne, *Travels in the Two Sicilies* (London, 1799), iv, 293.

one in search of marvels, could have missed—still less have forgotten—Etna.

But Homer was blind: and Etna, like Vesuvius, may not have been active then.

"Of what is the Signore thinking? The Signore is sad. He is thinking of the Fata Morgana that we have seen but not he."

Yes, Alessandro, yes, Pietro, I am thinking of the Fata Morgana, but not that which you have seen, but that which I have seen, but not you.

It may well be that he never sailed these seas or saw these shores: that some Phœnician talking in the market-place of the gateways of the great sea told him all he knew. What matter? Those blind eyes saw a vision, that divine spirit conceived an image which has outlasted the mere material and visible world, the sport of the earthquake, continually changed and pitilessly shattered as the brute earth shrinks upon that arc of fracture whose centre is Stromboli. All the poets, all the historians, all the geographers follow him. Those Phœnicians, they invented more than the Alphabet, but it was the Greek who turned everything they made and knew to divine use and beauty.

Yes, Alessandro, yes, Pietro, there was one who saw Fata Morgana and the greatest of all cities that have been or shall be, burning in the sky, and the loveliest woman ravished away, and the noblest of kings an old man humbled, and the greatest feats of arms. He knew the ways of the sea and the gateways thereof and sang of them and of the wanderings of the most experienced and the subtlest of men. And all these things are more enduring than these rocks and have outlasted many civilizations. Yet all these things exist because of him. And if he had not sung of these things he would have found others and they would have been as beautiful. And which is more real: your Messina which the earthquake destroys, or your Fata Morgana which fades with the sun?

And Alessandro and Pietro answered nothing, but pulled on into Messina.

CHAPTER II

TAORMINA

AT whatever time of year I may come to Taormina, with the snow of the almond blossom, the flame of the oleander, the purple of the grape, it has the same incredible beauty, incredible in any land but this; a beauty picturesque, rhetorical, exterior if you will, but overwhelming in its direct appeal and essentially dramatic, in its effect, as in its essence.

With this amazing beauty Taormina itself has little to do. It is wholly an affair of situation. The little town which has scarcely a monument, except the famous Greco-Roman Theatre, is lodged almost like some haphazard, rudely-built nest upon the mountain ledge, lying a little back from the sea and some 600 feet above it. Behind it tower two isolated heights, the one bearing somewhat precariously on its summit a cluster of houses —the village of Mola, the other crowned by the Castle. The background of all this is a tumbled mass of mountain range, the last of the Peloritani from which one lovely peak, Monte Venere, stands out against the sky.

But that is only the background of a panorama really incomparable and certainly the loveliest in Sicily. Before Taormina lies the violet sea and a coast broken by many a sleeping far-stretched headland: there to the north Capo S. Alessio, with its fort and village above it, goes steeply and brokenly into the sea; immediately beneath Taormina the lovely triple promontory of S. Andrea, with the small island, Isola Bella, in its arms, breaks the shore; to the south the black promontory of Capo Schisò crawls leanly into the Ionian. It is an incomparable riviera, and over all and at just the right distance, rises and reigns,

supreme in majesty and awe, snow-crowned Etna streaming its vast plume of smoke, immovable, ever changing, multi-coloured, that lies across half the sky like a cloud, and, like the great volcano itself, takes on every mood of the day.

It is this incomparable panorama, so clear, so luminous, so "classical" in its beauty, and yet to the seeing eye far more filled with mystery, with poetry, than any vague landscape of the North, which has given Taormina its name for beauty. And indeed in Taormina there is nothing else to do all day long but to enjoy it, and if there were you could do nothing but return to it, at every hour of the day, at every turning of the road, from the hill of the Theatre, from the path to Mola, from the Castle, from Monte Venere, in the morning when you wake, in the evening when you lie down; at all times your eyes are filled with it and yet can never have enough. No doubt Taormina was built where it is because of it.

For the Greeks beyond all other men were sensitive to such beauty; they never established a city or built a temple or a theatre without considering it; the landscape in which it stood, which it would, as it were, reveal, express and consecrate. There is no city of the Greeks in Sicily, as I know well, of which this is not true: Taormina and the Theatre of Taormina are only more obvious examples of their general custom. And here perhaps more than elsewhere their will in this has prevailed and their intention imposed itself upon us, certainly unused to such refinements. Time and destruction have left nothing certainly Greek, and almost nothing of any artistic importance in Taormina to distract us from the very first thoughts of its founders about it. There is nothing but the Theatre to take one's attention from the view, and the Theatre, as we might have divined, only gives us that incomparable panorama in its most dramatic perfection.

It is all *dolce far niente* in this town, really little more than a village, with its charming, haphazard streets, its exquisite, amateurish Gothic buildings as often as not in picturesque ruin, which can never have been serious works of art, one might think, but make a part of the charm of

ALMOND BLOSSOM AT TAORMINA

Etna in the distance

the place. You wander down the street, to climb up to the Theatre, to spend a lazy morning there lying in the sun and looking at the landscape. In the afternoon you climb up to Mola—it is the only or almost the only walk ; and all the delightful but toilsome way through the *poderi* filled perhaps with the snow of the almond, as the steep path turns, or hesitates, or offers a rest, it is to the landscape you turn, that marvellous view of mountain and sea and sea-shore over which the majesty of Etna is upreared awfully into the infinite sky. And gradually as one's spirit becomes attuned to this *genius loci*, one begins to perceive its meaning, to understand or at least to feel what it is to live in harmony with nature—nature, mistress of all masters, which certainly the Greeks understood with a clear sincerity to which we are complete strangers.

The secret of Taormina is that she is, as it were, the key to the landscape. Nor when I say that the Greeks who thus established her did so with that intention, do I forget that the first city, Naxos, of which Tauromenium was the daughter, was founded on the sea-shore. Indeed you may still see some foundations in the lemon grove on Capo Schisò, that low black tongue of lava thrust like a reef into the sea beyond the *marina* of Taormina, Giardini.

You may reach Naxos as I did in about an hour on foot from the Catania Gate or you may drive to it out of Porta Messina. It lay along the S. Venera torrent not far from the Acesines, and the mouth of that considerable stream may have been its harbour, or the north bay which still affords good anchorage. There is little to see : a few foundations in a lemon grove and portions of the wall, while not far away is a necropolis. In spite of this, Naxos, the site of Naxos, should certainly be visited, for it was the first Greek settlement in Sicily and for all Sicilian Greeks holy ground. And then in a place like Taormina where there is almost nothing to do and nowhere to go, one eagerly seizes an excuse for a walk.

The whole of this country has been largely changed since Naxos was founded by a body of colonists from Chalcis in Eubœa in 735 B.C. That long reef of lava

might seem to hint at it. The city once lay along the River Acesines, the modern Alcantara, from which what is now left of it is separated by the low delta between the torrent of S. Venera and the river. Thucydides, our chief if not our only authority in regard to the establishment of the Greek colonies in Sicily, represents Naxos as a purely Chalcidic settlement, but the very name would seem to attest the presence of a body of colonists from the island of that name, and Ephorus of Cumae calls Theocles the leader, an Athenian. The memory of Naxos as the earliest of all Greek settlements in Sicily was preserved by the dedication of an altar outside the city to Apollo Archegetes —Apollo the Leader—the patron deity under whose authority the expedition had sailed. And it was a custom still retained long after the destruction of Naxos itself, that all envoys proceeding on sacred missions to Greece or returning from Greece to Sicily, should offer sacrifice on this altar.[1]

Within a few years Naxos was so flourishing that she was able herself to send out colonists who established first Leontinoi, of which Theocles himself was the founder, and then Catana, both to the south. It is probable, though Thucydides says nothing of it, that Zankle (Messina) was also a colony of Naxos. So it certainly flourished for near 250 years, when about 491 B.C. Hippocrates, the tyrant of Gela, a Dorian city on the south coast, took it, and seems to have reduced it to permanent subjection.[2] Later it passed into the power of the tyrants Gelon and his brother Hieron of Syracuse (476 B.C.). The latter, in fact, drove out the inhabitants both of Naxos and Catana and settled them at Leontini, putting fresh colonists from other parts into the two dispeopled cities. In 461 B.C., however, the exiles returned to Catana, and there is no reason to believe that the exiles of Naxos were less fortunate. Naxos was thus still a Chalcidic city when the Athenian Expedition was launched against Syracuse. We find her joining the Athenians against the great Dorian city. It was at Naxos that the Athenian fleet first touched after crossing the straits. Naxos and Catana were indeed the only Greek

[1] Thucydides, vi, 3. [2] Herodotus, vii, 154.

cities in Sicily which sided with the Athenians.[1] That enormous disaster was to bring the retribution we might suppose. With the utter destruction of the Athenians, Syracuse turned upon their allies. She was prevented in her revenge for a time by the Carthaginian terror which engulfed Acragas, Gela and Camarina; but that passed. Dionysius of Syracuse, secure at last, threw himself on the Chalcidic cities, and, making himself master of Naxos by the treachery of her general, Procles, sold all the inhabitants into slavery, razed the city to the ground, and gave the site and territory to the neighbouring Sikelian barbarians (403 B.C.). Naxos never rose again, and it would seem that it was in fact the Sikeli who finally formed the settlement on the hill of Taurus which we know as Taormina. This befell about 396 B.C. About forty years later (358 B.C.), Andromachus, the father of the historian Timæus, gathered together the Naxian exiles scattered in various parts of Sicily and established them in the Sikelian town on Mount Taurus, which thus rose to be a Greek city, the true successor of Naxos. The city was called Tauromenium, and Andromachus was its tyrant. His rule was mild and he alone was not expelled by Timoleon, whom indeed he was the first to welcome, when he made his expedition to free Syracuse and Sicily from these tyrannies (345 B.C.).

The site of Naxos was never again inhabited, but the altar and shrine of Apollo Archegetes remained and marked the spot certainly till 36 B.C.

As for the history of Tauromenium, it is singularly uninteresting. It passed, after the death of Andromachus, into the power of Agathocles, King of Syracuse, who expelled Timæus, the historian. It then fell into the power of Tyndarion, a domestic despot, who helped to invite Pyrrhus into Sicily and marched with him upon Syracuse. A few years later it came into the power of Hieron of Syracuse and it remained a mere fortress and outpost of that city till the whole of Sicily was reduced to a Roman province, when its chief asset seems to have been the natural strength of its position. It is with the Empire it

[1] Thucydides, vii, 57.

begins to appear as what it is to-day, a pleasure resort, and, as such, a place of some consideration. It was celebrated for its wine, and Juvenal speaks of its mullet.

It is natural to ruminate among the stones of Naxos, beside the River Acesines, in seeking the shrine of Apollo, upon the history of Naxos; but up in Taormina, that rickety, delightful Bella Vista of a town, anything so formidable seems quite out of place. There the past counts for very little, memory is a blank, the day and night are enough and the eye is not satisfied with seeing.

And yet I don't know. Was I forgetting that famous Theatre? No. The Theatre is well enough, interesting enough, but one comes to use it after all chiefly as the foreground, or the frame of that incomparable panorama. And who shall say it was not just for that it was intended? I certainly will maintain it was.

One climbs up to it with the rest of the visitors to Taormina inevitably in the morning, at first with the intention of seeing it. For many it is the first theatre of the kind they have seen, and it is justly one of the most celebrated ruins in Sicily. It is built for the most part of brick and is therefore probably of Roman date, but the plan and the arrangement are Greek rather than Roman, and no doubt what we see is the ruin of a Roman building upon Greek foundations. In size it is only smaller than the theatre at Syracuse, and though here far the greater part of the seats have disappeared and only a grassy amphitheatre is left, the wall surrounding the *theatrum* remains and the *proscenium* with the back wall of the *scena*, though somewhat amended, is here alone in Sicily preserved almost complete. It was, so the decorative fragments which remain seem to establish, of the Corinthian order and of a late time.

But one soon ceases to care about such archæological facts, caught in the perfection of that incredible panorama. In that ecstasy of light and marvel of landscape, the hours pass and one lives in a world not realized or realizable.

This was the genius of the Greeks—to make perfect imperfection: this was their art, to reach not the universal but the absolute. Consider then the ritual for instance of

the *Œdipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles upon such a stage as this. The tragedy unfolds itself there in the full golden light before that open colonnade which is the *scena*, through which was seen that violet sea, that incomparable sea-shore, the awful mass, the majesty, the height and the snows of smoking Etna. As the light fails the tragedy deepens, and, as it draws to its tremendous close, the sunset, little by little, stains ever a deeper and a deeper crimson the pure snows of the volcano till the self-slaughtered Queen, the self-blinded King pass into the darkness which only the stars and the far breathing mountain illumine or mitigate.

Yes, they and they alone knew how to seize the thousand opportunities of the Creator, to make of difficulty a weapon of victory, to reconcile man and his arts with God and with nature. You think it wonderful that Rome piled stone on stone and made an arena where agony and death should be a spectacle for the multitude ? You think it wonderful that the Middle Age thrust its buttresses up into the clouds and under the high embowed roof made a darkness in which the soul might creep forth and pray ? You think it wonderful that the Renaissance built with space and light and made a reasonable house of praise ? But the Greeks, when they built, brought the whole landscape into their sanctuary, and in building a temple consecrated the hills about it : they contrived by their genius that the most wonderful mountains of God should make a background for their tragedies in which man in the grip of fate struggled to be free. They brought the sound of the sea into their verse and the sun into their chorus ; of the gesture of the hills they took tribute and the wind was but one of their voices ; they wreathed their cities with flowers and their great reward was a crown of wild olive.

Yes, it is good to lie in the Theatre of Taormina. Just there one comes to perceive, and in a larger way than before the Parthenon, the genius of the Greeks for harmony : it is a secret they have not passed on.

Little or nothing else of their time remains in Taormina : the vestiges of what is said to have been a Greek temple in the modernized church of S. Pancrazio outside Porta

Messina do not amount to much, and the "Naumachia" in the garden below the Hotel Naumachia is Roman and not very interesting—two large Roman cisterns, possibly parts of a Bath and a long niched wall. Far better worth seeing is the Little Theatre, probably Roman, by the church of S. Caterina near the Palazzo Corvaja just above the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, which was the ancient Forum. A good deal remains of this building, including four rows of tiled seats, parts of the stage and covered-in passages and entrances.

All these together will scarcely fill an afternoon, and indeed it is not for such things one comes to Taormina; but they are part of the distractions and curiosities of a place which is full of the vestiges of many periods, none of which with the exception of the Theatre is of any real importance.

Taormina in truth is not a place for sightseeing but for *dolce far niente*, for basking in the sun between a stroll and a stroll, always with that marvellous panorama before one, of which who could tire, changing as it does with every mood of the sky, with every hour of the day. At first, maybe, you are impatient because there is so little to see, so little, that is, in the way of antiquities, works of art, buildings, churches, museums. But as day follows day, little by little you fall into the mood of the place and are content to do nothing but to enjoy the sun if it be winter, to wander into a church here, a garden there, and to learn by heart the moods that Etna takes on and seems to impose on the whole landscape. That is the secret of Taormina, of its perennial attraction: Etna rises up before it and is by far its most overwhelming and dominating presence. That landscape, the glorious panorama, what would it be without Etna: something not very different after all from what many another coast in the Mediterranean affords. It is Etna that lends it its mystery, its extraordinary fascination, not without a certain awe in its beauty.

I remember very well the first time I came to Taormina. It was a grey day at the beginning of February. In the late afternoon light there was nothing to be seen and I went

to bed almost determined to go on to Syracuse on the morrow. By some undeserved good fortune I woke, I know not why, about six next morning, and, my bed facing the window of the room, on first opening my eyes I beheld very high up in the sky a rosy cloud which I watched with ever increasing wonder. I was watching the sun rise upon the snows of Etna.

Though the sunrise upon Etna is certainly the most magical of the delights of Taormina, it always seems to me to be of a piece with the rest. They certainly have something of its surprise and should be enjoyed almost as restfully. The almonds in February, for instance, without a leaf, like trees spellbound suddenly drenched with beauty, snow-white for the most part with here and there a deep pink—but who may know all their colours, so various they be, if you will but look at them.

And then the palaces—so small and so entrancing, they seem as magical in their charm as the almond blossom. You would not go out to see them, but they are there for your walk, the Palazzo Corvaja at one end of the Corso, the Palazzo Ciampoli with its flight of steps at the other, the Palazzo S. Stefano by the Catania Gate, and many others, among which, though it is not a palace, I will include the Torre Medioevale outside Porta Catania. They have little or no importance in themselves, but are part of the charm of the place.

Not nearly so much can be said for the churches, which are without distinction, but the convents, or rather the ex-convents, are certainly not to be missed: the Badia Vecchia above the Ciampoli Palace, with its lovely ruined Gothic windows, its clustering columns—Badia Vecchia gratia plena; the Convent of S. Caterina, now a private villa; and the Convent of S. Domenico, now an hotel, with their cloisters full of the spring and their gardens: no, Taormina cannot spare them.

And it is the same with Mola. I suppose no one has ever been three days in Taormina without climbing up to Mola. It is the one walk of the place and a very lovely one. You pass out beside the Carmine or S. Francesco da

Paola near Porta Catania and presently find yourself on an ever steepening rough-hewn path between hedges of Indian fig and open terraced *poderi* planted with olives, with the vine, with corn, and everywhere, and not least between the stones, a riot of wild growth, of wild flowers. On the way you are almost sure to meet a herd of the goats of Taormina, rather large in size, and the boy herdsman seated on a stone by the path, maybe trying his pipe—a truly Theocritan scene. It matters not at all whether you ever reach Mola for it has nothing to offer you but the same panorama—a little wider perhaps—which, in fact, is Taormina: it is the way that enchants you, and the play of sun and cloud on the snowfields of Etna and the earliest spring—spring caught in a leafless brake, that, if it be early February, you are sure to find there. In its own kind it is quite exquisite, this climbing path, and out of Syracuse I know of no better pleasure in Sicily than a morning there with Theocritus.

If you take the trouble to reach Mola you can return by another path and climb, on the way, up to the Castello and so on by S. Maria della Rocca back to Taormina. That would be a little strenuous for Taormina, for the spirit of Taormina, and of course to climb Monte Venere is far more fatiguing—an affair of donkeys, I suppose.[1] No, the genius of Taormina has nothing boisterous or energetic about it. It is a desecration that tennis courts should have been built in a place mercifully preserved from all the more banal delights of the Riviera. Taormina ought perhaps to be reserved for people who, like Theocritus, are a little weary and bored by a dying and often brutal civilization, and are able, if not to create as he did, at least to enjoy, a far more delightful world of the imagination—

[1] Far better to motor to Savoca beyond Capo S. Andrea—the road is a magnificent corniche all the way—and to visit there the abandoned "Norman" convent of SS. Pietro and Paolo, a magnificent building of red brick, quite without equal on this Eastern coast: a work of the Saracens in Norman service. It dates from the twelfth century (1171–2) as a Greek inscription over the entrance records and was the work of Gerardo il Franco. Within there are three naves with semicircular apses, the curious cupolaed roof is very interesting.

the only world that will endure or where one can be completely happy. For such people Taormina may be a paradise, for they are content with little, if that little include quietness and this harmonious garden in the sun.

CHAPTER III

THE SKIRTS OF ETNA: ACI REALE AND CATANIA

THAT joyous descent from Taormina to Giardini—joyous in its so various beauty, and surprising in its lovely opportunities of farewell—does not prepare you at all for the strange and sinister kingdom you enter when you have crossed the Alcantara—the kingdom of Etna.

Something of what you are to find, the merest hint of it, you receive every now and again, even in Taormina, whenever that lean black reef of lava by which the ruins of Naxos lie, happens to catch your eye; but I, certainly, had not realized what the country was like that Etna had made its own—a landscape everywhere marred and broken by black torrents and fields and ridges of lava, everywhere blackened by fire and torn by earthquake, everywhere under the domination, the dread and the shadow, of the volcano. Etna, in all its majesty and beauty as seen from Taormina, gives you no inkling of the truth.

You come upon it first, if you take that ride in an automobile to which you will certainly be persuaded in Taormina, to see the lavas of the last eruption of a few years ago. You come down first to Naxos and then turn up the Alcantara valley which divides the last of the Peloritani mountains from Etna itself. Your way lies through orange and lemon groves, through the sunshine that glorifies the almond blossom, and up the ever-mounting, ever-winding road through Francavilla to the little city of Castiglione, clustered on a towering rock, that numbers 12,000 inhabitants though it looks like an eyrie for eagles, 2,000 feet or more in the air. Through the woods you go,

over many a moraine, till suddenly at a turn of the way you enter the kingdom of Etna. The whole world is changed, and before you lies a darkling landscape, as of the moon, utterly desolate and inhuman, without a tree or a flower or a weed, where only the wind is at home ; even the sun seems to have gone out, in a cloudless sky. Through this black, dismal landscape you pass on to Linguaglossa and through it you return to the Alcantara valley, and the world we know.

It is, though less brutally, into this same Etnean Kingdom you come when, crossing the Alcantara, you pass on your way to Aci Reale and Catania. Immediately you enter it something sinister stains the sunlight ; the Indian figs, which everywhere abound, look evil as well as grotesque ; and though the vines and the blossoming almonds make a sunshine, a shadow seems to have fallen over everything, a spirit of darkness at any rate, that you find it hard to account for.

This territory, which strikes you at once by its melancholy and forbidding aspect, where the light is often palpably obscured by the cloud and fog in the upper air, is well defined. You enter it when you cross the Alcantara ; you leave it and quite as suddenly when you pass out of the ragged environs of Catania, and the great plain of Leontinoi, or as it is called to-day, the Piana di Catania, opens before you, a green mirror full of light in winter and spring, a shield of gold all through the rest of the year.

The influence of Etna seems to lie lightest on those little towns upon the now lofty coast, Aci Reale, Aci Castello, and many another " Aci " which alone now mark the course of that lost stream, the Acis. They are on the edge of the sea—and what a sea ! And yet I don't know. Does not the very legend of Acis and Galatea bear witness to the sinister and dark spirit which broods over this landscape in spite of the sea, in spite of all that radiant sun and sky ?

Acis, the son of Faunus and Symaethis, was loved by the nymph Galatea ; and so Polyphemus the Cyclops, jealous of him, crushed him under a huge rock, and his blood, gushing forth from under, was changed by the nymph

into the stream that bore his name. What was Faunus but some faun of the woods, the sylvan genius of the upper valleys? What was Symaethis but the nymph of the Symaethos, the river that still bears her name and that enters the sea just south of Catania? What was Polyphemus but one of the innumerable craters of Etna—Polyphemus the one-eyed giant, hurling forth rocks and stones, awkward and unaccountable in his brutal roughness? And what was Galatea but a sea-nymph, one of Nereus' daughters—the delicate milk-white foam of the sea, the clear and graceful wave breaking in lace-like foam upon the beach or dancing among the black lava rocks? No wonder Polyphemus loved her and was always running after her and seeking her embraces. But she spurned him and took Acis into her arms, into her bosom. Yet the Cyclops loved her with endless wooing, and she could not tell which was stronger in her, her hate of the Cyclops or her love for Acis. So it befell.

But where are to-day "the sacred waters of Acis," as Theocritus calls them in his very first idyll, the one that begins with a music like the whispering pine it describes:

Ἀδύ τι τὸ ψιθύρισμα καὶ ἁ πίτυς, αἰπόλε, τήνα . . .

Solinus speaks of the extreme coldness of its waters, which might seem to suggest the Fiumefreddo not far from the Alcantara. But if Acium, now Aci Reale, got its name from the stream, it was certainly further south and there is little doubt that it should be identified with the Fiume di Jaci which in fact rises under a rock of lava and runs its short course to the sea by Aci Reale. You may climb down to its mouth by a steep path called *la Scalazza*.

Aci Reale is a fairly pleasant place to stay in, with many delightful excursions about it—to Aci S. Antonio, with its wonderful vegetation, and the other Acis and even to the Trecastagni. But owing to the eruption and earthquake of 1693, which entirely destroyed the town, there is nothing of antiquity to be found there except the Pozzo di S. Venera and the remains of a Roman bath about two miles away. The church of S. Sebastiano has, however, a fine baroque façade dating from 1705. Far better worth

ETNA FROM TAORMINA

seeing is the view from the Belvedere, the public garden which is magnificent both toward Etna and along the coast.

The fishermen of Aci Reale are a particularly fine race, and I got a couple of them to sail and row me *in barca* along the coast all the way from Aci Reale past the Rocks of the Cyclops and the supposed Port of Ulysses (Ognina) to Catania. It was a most wonderful voyage, and as we started early and the morning was fair I was able to visit the now half-ruined Grotta delle Palumbe—a large stalactite cave to the north of Aci Reale before setting out southward.

The coast is high here, a vast sloping tableland, high above the sea. The view of Etna all the way was most wonderful. Its real interest, however, began when the Rocks of the Cyclops came in sight, and, beyond, the picturesque mediæval town of Aci Castello.

The Rocks of the Cyclops—but is this indeed the fabled site of the encounter between Polyphemus and Odysseus? Tradition seems to say so: Euripides in his delightful satire, *The Cyclops*, Virgil in the third book of the *Æneid*, Ovid in the *Metamorphoses*, all maintain it. But if this is the place, then we may be even more sure than before that Homer never saw Sicily, for he cannot, he above all, have stood right under Etna and have never spoken of it. But there is more in it than that.

To begin with, Odysseus' adventure with the Cyclops takes place immediately after his meeting with the Lotus Eaters, and immediately before his visit to the Æolian Isle.

In the *Odyssey*, Book ix, 103, he leaves the land of the Lotus Eaters: "So they (his comrades) went on board straightway and sat down upon the benches and, sitting well in order, smote the grey sea with their oars. Thence we sailed on, grieved at heart, and we came to the Land of the Cyclopes." The adventure with Polyphemus follows, and the Book ends with the refrain: "Thence we sailed on, grieved at heart, glad to have escaped death though we had lost our dear comrades." Book x opens with these words: "Then to the Æolian Isle we came where dwelt Æolus, son of Hippotas, dear to the immortal gods, on a floating island. . . ."

Now it is generally admitted that the Lotus Eaters dwelt in Tunisia, and that the Æolian Isle is one of the Æolian islands. It remains then to discover how, if the Cyclopes dwelt beneath Etna, Odysseus reached the Æolian Isle without passing through the Strait of Messina, without, that is, passing Scylla and Charybdis. Unless indeed he sailed right round Sicily, as, in fact, Æneas wonderfully did, and all before a north wind!

Of course the usual answer to this is, that, as the voyage of Odysseus took place in and out of fairyland, its geography is insoluble. But I for one believe in the geography of the Odyssey; I like to think of it as a genuine description of the Western Mediterranean, completely logical in its progress, and as having nothing to do with fairyland at all. If those who think as I do are right, then the site of the encounter with Polyphemus cannot have been under Etna. Where else might it have taken place? Well, if the Cyclopes are the personification of volcanoes or craters, then there is at least one place as likely as Etna upon the Mediterranean coasts which might have served Homer's purpose. That spot is to be found, as Victor Bérard [1] has shown, in the Gulf of Pozzuoli in the Phlegræan Fields, to the west of Naples.

I cannot here enter into Victor Bérard's minute and logical argument concerning the reality of the voyage as described by Homer. I must content myself with referring the reader to one of the most fascinating Homeric studies that has ever been undertaken. Here it will be enough to point out, to those who are ready to disown the fairyland hypothesis, the initial difficulty of the site of Etna for the adventure with Polyphemus. Of course those who accept the fairyland notion have no interest in the matter, since everything that happens to Odysseus is then without reality or meaning—"tutto é una frasca."

But those who would see in the foundations of the

[1] *Les Phéniciens et L'Odysée*, par Victor Bérard (Armand Colin, 1903), 2 tomes. The book has long been out of print, but a new edition is promised as part of M. Bérard's larger opus dealing with the *Odyssey*. On the other hand, there is Samuel Butler, who maintained that the *Odyssey* was nothing but a *giro* round Sicily (*The Authoress of the Odyssey*).

Odyssey the quite true experience of Phœnician sailors, misinterpreted certainly and perhaps symbolized, but essentially true, the question of the site of the adventure with the Cyclops should have some interest. It should please them to find that the Neapolitan site offers a much clearer parallel to that described by Homer than this under Etna.

In the first place, there is no island here under Etna which might serve for that where Odysseus harboured; a wooded isle, wild, and the abode of many goats, neither close to nor far from the coast, and able to harbour twelve ships—unless, indeed, it be the Isola d'Aci, the largest of the rocks here which is about 2,300 feet in circumference and about 230 feet high. But this is supposed to be one of the rocks hurled at Odysseus and not the island of goats where he left his ships.

In the Gulf of Pozzuoli, on the other hand, we have, not far from shore, the Island of Nisida which opens towards the south-west to form a circular harbour. There, too, are isolated rocks rising out of the sea which well represent those hurled by the giant.

However this may really be, universal antiquity accepted Etna as the home of Polyphemus. Not only Euripides, Virgil and Ovid, but Theocritus also, describe him there, or ever Odysseus came, and not alone in the exquisite eleventh idyll, but in the sixth and seventh also, sighing for Galatea:

Ὦ λευκὰ Γαλάτεια, τί τὸν φιλέοντ' ἀποβάλλῃι. . . .

So long a tradition, quite apart from the obvious interest of the spot, draws one to these Rocks of the Cyclops. The largest of these is the Isola d'Aci, immediately opposite Aci Trezza, which belongs to-day to the University of Catania, to which it was given by the Marchese Gravina for the study of marine biology. Permission to visit the island must be obtained from the University. It is a basaltic formation in which are many caverns worn by the sea such as the Grotta del Monaco, and on the south side some prehistoric tombs may be seen. To the south of this island, where I suppose Odysseus left his ships, lie

the Rocks of the Cyclops properly so called, of all sizes and shapes. The largest is a great horned pinnacle rising up from a broad circular base and seemingly built of roughly-hewn columns. They have little more than a geological interest, apart from their picturesqueness grouped thus off the coast with the beautiful headland and ruined castle of Aci Castello beyond, and smoking Etna towering over all.

At Aci Castello the lava-formed coast becomes quite low, and there, beyond many a bay, lies Catania, really to the south of Etna and by no means, as it is generally described, between Etna and the sea. Giarre and Riposto really hold that position, while Catania as the crow flies is no nearer to the summit of Etna than is Taormina.

One of these bays, that of Ognina, has been identified with the Portus Ulixis of Virgil.

"Meanwhile," says Æneas recounting his voyage to Dido, after the flight from burning Troy, "Meanwhile at sundown the wind failed our weary company, and in ignorance of the way we drift up to the Cyclopes' coast. There lies a harbour safe from the winds' approach and spacious in itself, but near at hand Etna thunders with terrifying crashes, and now hurls forth to the sky a black cloud smoking with ashes, now . . ." There in the woods the Trojan fugitives find Achæmenides, the luckless comrade of much-enduring Ulysses, who has passed by not long before. He, it seems, though Homer knows nothing of it, was left in the Cyclops' cave, and escaping—we are not told how—but still in horrible fear of the Cyclopes, he has hidden in the woods till he is rescued by Æneas.

This then, according to Virgil, was the place where Ulysses, having left all the ships save his own moored at the island, himself landed and made his way to the cave of Polyphemus. Well, I don't believe it. Virgil, who is as capable as Racine of calling the sea *la plaine liquide*, says this harbour is safe from the winds' approach. He never saw it at all or at any rate not in a scirocco. He knew nothing of the sea—like the Roman he was, or the Mantuan for that matter.

And now, we drew near to Catania, her domes and towers glistened in the sun.

"*Certatim socii feriunt mare et aequora verrunt,*" and soon I was on the quay, and, after a bottle of wine, said good-bye to the sailors of Aci Reale and saw them presently depart. Then I made my way into the richest and, save Palermo, the largest, but quite the least attractive city in Sicily.

Except that it is the most usual base for the ascent of Etna, I see no reason at all for a visit to Catania, with its noise, its dirt, its trams, its baroque churches and its complete absence of interest or delight.

Povera Catania! So often destroyed and always threatened by Etna, of whose lava she is built, it is no wonder that she has nothing to offer the traveller in search of Theocritus.

For Catania is altogether a city of to-day, prosperous, vulgar and, so far as the traveller is concerned, better left alone. The trouble is that it is not easy to give her the go-by. She is by far the best base for an ascent or an exploration of Etna, and she holds the key of the railway between Palermo or Girgenti on the one hand, and Syracuse or Taormina on the other. For this reason it is a pity there is not a really first-rate hotel which might attract visitors in place of antiquities or works of art.

Here I think Catania has perhaps failed to make the most of an opportunity.[1]

If so—and after all the strangers' season is very short—it is the only thing in which she has failed. For I think what strikes you most in the town is its character—its opportunism and persistence. With the most unfortunate and insecure situation in the whole island, Catania has made itself by far the richest city in Sicily.

[1] The opportunity I have in mind is this: most visitors to Sicily go from Syracuse to Girgenti, or from Girgenti to Syracuse direct by train. The journey by auto costs something like twenty pounds. At present the journey by train takes eleven hours. Nearly every one puts up with this very tiring and uncomfortable piece of travel because he is sure of a good hotel at Syracuse and at Girgenti. If Catania could offer us a really attractive, clean hotel, we should all break these journeys there.

Always threatened and continually half-destroyed by arms, by earthquake, by eruption, it has never succumbed. It was so in antiquity, it has been so ever since. Dionysius of Syracuse almost destroyed it and sold its inhabitants as slaves because, over-persuaded by Alcibiades, it admitted and aided the Athenians in the Sicilian Expedition. Catania rose again only to fall into the hands of the Carthaginians after the Syracusan naval defeat immediately outside the port. There followed an eruption of Etna. In spite of three such disasters within a single decade, Catania continued to exist.

It is with the same pertinacity she has always faced Etna. At least since 396 B.C., she has been continually threatened, her territory overwhelmed, and often herself half destroyed by earthquake and eruption; but she has persisted, she is there, and not only there but alive as no other city in Sicily is. Notably in 121 B.C. in 1169, and in 1669, Etna half overwhelmed her with molten lava that remained red-hot for years. Nevertheless she lived, and continues with an energy not only surprising in itself but most of all in Sicily.

With a geographical situation and a natural harbour finer than anything Catania can boast and with a tradition second to that of no other city in the Mediterranean, Syracuse is to-day little more than that original encampment on the Island of Ortygia. Her magnificent port, though it commands two seas, is largely deserted. It is Catania which, after two thousand years of enmity, has humbled her at last.

Is it the opposition, the ever-present threat of Etna, that has thus excited in Catania so lively a reaction? Or does she draw, like her orchards and her gardens, a new life from that volcanic soil? Does she breathe at the feet of Polyphemus some life-enhancing air that fills her with so mastering a spirit?

Certainly the life of Catania is amazing. The people shout and whistle and sing in the streets as though to express or relieve themselves from some formidable energy which seems to possess them. Amid palms, cacti, agaves and hedges and plantations of prickly pear which

LEMONS

alone grows actually in the lava, amid lemon groves and orange groves in the little valleys between the lava ridges, she stands actually on the lava itself which has been levelled by her labour and of which for the most she herself and all that is hers is built.

Unlike any other Sicilian city she lies open to the sun, divided into two parts by the broad, straight Via Etnea some two miles long, through which all her life flows backwards and forwards and passes into the scarcely lesser streets which cross it at right angles to end in the sea or in the mighty staircase of Etna. All these streets seem always to be crowded with people, with trams, with drays laden with sulphur, with gaily painted carts full of oranges or lemons or lemon skins or earthenware jars; with bars that are themselves full of smartest Catanian youth, vulgarly dressed in what are fondly supposed to be London fashions, shining with patent leather boots, with rings, with watch-chains and jewellery, and eating ices of innumerable sorts and colours and shapes and sizes, or drinking the black coffee that is brewed in huge white metal machines and drawn off through a little tap.

The Piazza del Duomo in which the Via Etnea begins has a little more dignity perhaps. In the midst, an Egyptian obelisk of granite which once stood in the Roman amphitheatre of Catania has been upreared characteristically upon the back of an antique elephant of lava, the symbol of the city, by Vaccarini, the native architect of the eighteenth century, and goes to form the Fontana dell' Elefante.

The Duomo itself has little of interest left to it. Originally a building of Roger I in 1092, it has been ruined by successive earthquakes between 1169 and 1693, and is now a reconstruction by Vaccarini in 1736. The only ancient parts of the building are the three apses and a part of the crossing. The façade is baroque with antique columns of granite from the ancient theatre.

Within, the most interesting things are the Aragon tombs of the fourteenth century in the sanctuary, and the choir stalls there, inlaid with the legend of S. Agatha. Against the second pilaster, on the right on entering, is

the tomb of Vincenzo Bellini, the musician. A line from his famous opera, *Somnambula:*

" Ah, non credea mirarti sì presto estinto, o fiore ! "

brings that divine *aria* to one's mind with, to mine at least, the clear and simple voice of Galli Curci.

In the Chapel on the right of the sanctuary is the tomb of S. Agatha, who has taken the place of Galatea as the protectress of the city. Her festival is celebrated on the 5th February, when her treasury is opened. Here is the silver reliquary, designed by Giovanni di Bartolo of Siena and made at Limoges, a bust of the saint, containing her head, and the golden crown set with precious stones that is said to have been presented to the saint by our Richard Coeur de Lion, a fine example, one is told, of the art of the twelfth century, together with many other such gifts.

The other buildings in Catania really worth seeing are the convent and church of S. Niccola, an enormous baroque building in the highest part of the city ; the Biscari Palace in the same style, which contains a museum, especially notable for its collection of ancient Greek coins and which has been famous for over two hundred years ; and the church of Santo Carcere, the holy prison of S. Agatha, whose doorway, taken from the Cathedral after the earthquake of 1169, is a very fine piece of Norman work. This church stands over the place where S. Agatha was martyred, and within you may see her cell and the print of her foot in a piece of lava.

S. Agatha is the powerful and famous protectress of the city of Catania. Many times the Catanians assert she has saved the city from Etna, and her festival of 5th February is still one of the most picturesque ceremonies remaining in the island. She was a noble Sicilian lady of great beauty, martyred under the Emperor Decius in 251, a victim—so it is said—to the cruelty and the lust of Quintianus, governor of Sicily, who, when she refused him, first cut off her breasts and then rolled her naked over live coals mixed with broken potsherds. At this awful cost to her body she is said to have preserved her body's virginity. It might seem impossible to believe

that such things could befall in the height of the Roman administration: but S. Agatha's name appears upon the diptych of the Canon of the Mass, and I suppose would not be there unless her acts were for the most part authentic. Moreover one is obliged to remember that the Romans were the one European people who publicly enjoyed the spectacle of pain.

Thus you may see Catania; and wandering through these busy streets and recalling S. Agatha, really never realize or remember that Catania was a Greek city founded in the eighth century B.C. There is certainly no sign of it above ground.

But Catana as she was then called, was, in fact, of Chalcidic origin, founded from the neighbouring city of Naxos immediately after the establishment of Leontinoi. Her history largely follows that of her founder city. It was, however, Alcibiades who lured her to her ruin when he made that famous speech of which no record remains and persuaded her to side with Athens in that most fatal expedition against Syracuse (415 B.C.)

Among her guests of Greek days was the poet Stesichorus, the contemporary of Sappho and Alcaeus, who died here at the age of eighty in 556 B.C. He was one of the nine chiefs of lyric poetry recognized by antiquity. It was said that just after his birth, a creature of the air, a nightingale from somewhere, settled secretly on his lips and began its clear song, while Antipater of Sidon, writing his epitaph, says, "Stesichorus the vast, immeasurable voice of the Muse, was buried in Catana's fiery land, he in whose breast, as telleth the philosopher Pythagoras, Homer's soul lodged again." Isocrates tells us that, "Helen of Troy displayed her power to the poet Stesichorus. Having found some fault with her at the beginning of his poem, the *Helen*, he went away [from the performance] blind, and then, when realizing the cause of his misfortune, he composed what is called the *Palinode* or Recantation, she restored him his sight."

As a worker of miracles, Helen makes a charming sister to S. Agatha.

There were other famous men in Greek Catana besides

Stesichorus. Andron of Catana was the first to introduce dancing to accompany the flute, we are told by Athenaeus; but far more famous than he were the "Pii Fratres," Amphinomus and Anapias, who, during a great eruption of Etna, left all their property to be destroyed while they carried off their aged parents on their shoulders. So great did their virtue seem to the Gods that the lava stream itself is said to have parted and flowed aside so as not to harm them. Statues were erected in their honour, and the place of their burial was known as the "Campus Piorum"; their figures appear on the coins of Catana. But what are we to think of the Cantanesi if this action was considered so exceptional?

Thus the modern city of S. Agatha becomes one with the old Greek foundation. Not a vestige of that Greek city which Stesichorus and Andron and the Pii Fratres knew remains, so far as is known, above or below ground. Earthquake and eruption seem to have disposed of it. But you may find fragments of its Roman successor which have been excavated in the manner of Herculaneum.

The most important of these are the remains of the theatre and amphitheatre in Piazza Stesichoro, which seem to belong to the age of Augustus. The former was still perfect in the eleventh century when it was destroyed by the Norman Count Roger in order to adorn his new Cathedral. Close by you may still see beneath the lava the Odeium. Fragments also remain of the Baths and an Aqueduct destroyed in the eruption of 1669.

But Catania thinks as little of these, if that be possible, as we think of Roman London. However, she still has faith in S. Agatha who, no doubt, as the learned will assure us, is the successor of, and has much in common with, Catania's pagan protectress Galatea: Have they not both three "a"s in their names?

CHAPTER IV

ETNA

AS you look on Etna from Taormina, transfigured in the early morning, or fading in the evening light, subject all day long to every mood of the sky, and at night a lovely ghost amid the constellations; as you gaze up at it from Catania at sunset like a golden altar lighted with fire from heaven; or, as you think in farewell, you turn at Lentinoi and see it rising in one exquisite unbroken line from the sea; or, again, unexpectedly, when you catch sight of it at Syracuse, from the stones of Epipolæ, an ethereal pyramid of snow; you might think it a vision, a mountain in a dream, its beauty too perfect and too complete for anything wholly of this world.

It must have been so the ancients saw it, understanding it even less than I do, but, even as I, unable to forget it, its beauty filling their minds with awe as they sought in their hearts for its meaning and the reason of its being.

So they cover it with stories, some beautiful, some terrible, but all as it were interpretations of its beauty or its power: Galatea laughs about its feet at Polyphemus, that one-eyed giant, awkward, unkempt and brutal, who will one day rise up and crush with his rocks her lover, Acis. That exquisite idyll, told with so consummate a grace by Theocritus, and translated, as it were, by Ovid, might seem, rightly understood, to be a far better explanation of such a phenomenon as Etna presents than can be found in all the pages of the geologists. For all our knowledge has not enabled us to write an idyll like that, nor, as a matter of fact, are we any nearer, if as near, a right explanation of Etna.

What does it profit me to know that Etna is the loftiest

mountain in Sicily, being 10,758 feet high and by far the greatest volcano in Europe; that it is 18 miles north by west of Catania, covers a territory of 460 square miles and is about 100 miles round the base; that it is older than Vesuvius and that its activity is older than the glacial period in Central Europe; that it forms an isolated mass, bounded on the north by the Alcantara River, on the east by the sea, and on the west and south by the Giarretta, the ancient Symaethos? Such facts no doubt have their use, but when you have added to them all that modern science can tell you, you are not a hair's breadth nearer explaining why at various and irregular intervals Etna pours forth destruction upon its territory, and many times has half destroyed the city of Catania. You do not know why it should do it, any more than you can foretell when it is going to befall.

All that is known of Etna to-day does not seem to me to amount to as much as what is implied in those idylls of Theocritus and the fables of the ancients. There we are told that Typhoeus, the son of Tartarus and Gaea, a fire-breathing giant with a hundred heads, desired to acquire the sovereignty of gods and men, but was subdued after a fearful struggle by Zeus with a thunderbolt, and "now the steep shores above Cumae, and Sicily too, lie heavy on his shaggy breast, and the column that soareth to heaven crusheth him, even snow-clad Etna, who nurseth her keen frost for the livelong year—Etna, from whose inmost caves burst forth the purest founts of unapproachable fire, and, in the day time, her rivers roll a lurid stream of smoke, while amid the gloom of night, the ruddy flame, as it sweepeth along, with crashing din whirleth rocks to the deep sea far below. And that monster flingeth aloft the most fearful founts of fire, a monstrous marvel to behold, a wonder even to hear, when men are hard by; such a being is he that lieth bound between those dark-leaved heights and the ground below, while all his outstretched back is goaded by his craggy couch!"

That seems to be all we know, and since Pindar wrote his first Pythian Ode,[1] what, even till to-day, has natural

[1] Pindar Pyth. i, 30 *et seq.* Cf. Æschylus, *Prometheus*, 353 *et seq.*

science told us else or more—though with how much less art of expression? And if you want something more philosophical, take down Lucretius and turn to the sixth book, and you will receive a more profound impression of the greatness and mystery of the Universe and the wonder of Etna than in all the geological text-books.

The silence of Homer, if indeed he is silent and Polyphemus himself is not Etna, might seem inexplicable; for even though he were never in Sicily, the sailors' gossip which informed him of such comparatively tame wonders as Scylla and Charybdis, could scarcely have been silent concerning Etna, had the volcano been as active then as it was later, or even as it is to-day.

Hesiod, however, in the eighth century B.C. certainly knew the name of Etna,[1] and from the time of the Greek settlements in Sicily the mountain has been, of course, well known, and has been continually recorded.

Pindar, as we have seen, gives us an account of the volcano, and probably describes therein the eruption of 479 B.C. which took place on the same day as the Battle of Platæa.[2] This is generally said to have been the second eruption after the advent of the Greeks, the first is not recorded save by Thucydides who, speaking of the third, which took place in 425 B.C., says that it happened fifty years after the last preceding one, and that "three eruptions all told are reported to have occurred since Sicily has been inhabited by the Hellenes."[3] The fourth eruption, that of 396 B.C., is recorded by Diodorus. After the destruction of the Athenian Expedition in 413 B.C. the Carthaginians fell upon Sicily and were met by Dionysius of Syracuse, who had built his fortress of Epipolæ to oppose them. The Carthaginian generals were Himilcar, in command of the Army, and Mago, in command of the Fleet. They fell upon Messina and destroyed it, and proceeded to advance by Taormina, then in the hands of the Sikelians, upon Catania. "Himilcar set out," says Diodorus, "and quickly

[1] See Strabo, Lib. I, Cap. ii, par. 14.

[2] Pindar: Pyth. i, 40–50. Æschylus: *Prometheus*, 370, refers to the same eruption, it is thought.

[3] Thucydides iii, 116.

reached Naxos at the same time as Mago, who sailed along the coast; but a recent eruption of Etna, which reached as far as the sea, prevented the troops proceeding by land step by step with the fleet, for the coast was all ravaged by the lava of the volcano, so that the army was obliged to make the circuit of Etna." [1] In other words, the army was obliged to pass up the valley of Alcantara and so to reach Catania by the way north and west round the mountain.

Etna then seems to have been quiescent, as indeed Theocritus leads us to believe it was in his day, till 140 B.C., when we hear of four very violent eruptions in about twenty years (140, 135, 126 and 121 B.C.). The last was the most terrible, especially for Catania, which it half destroyed. As bad or worse were to come in 49, 44, and 38 B.C. These seven eruptions in about 100 years devastated the whole Etnean region of the eastern coast, which became uninhabitable and impassable for lack of water. Virgil [2] describes the eruption of 49 B.C., which he suggests presaged Cæsar's murder, both in the *Georgics* and the *Æneid*; and Livy [3] asserts that the hot sand and ashes were carried as far as Reggio. While Pliny [4] tells us that the noise of the eruption of 38 B.C. was heard in all parts of Sicily and that the ashes were carried to a distance of 150 miles.

These tremendous outbursts seem to have exhausted the activity of the volcano for many ages, and Orosius, writing in the fifth century of our era, speaks of Etna as having become quite harmless.

It awoke again with a vengeance after a thousand years. In 1169, 1329 and 1381 appalling eruptions occurred, the lava reaching the sea; in 1669 part of Catania was overwhelmed when the worst eruption of modern times occurred. Lesser disasters befell all through the nineteenth century, and the latest date from March, 1910 and May, 1911.

[1] Diodorus, xiv, 59.
[2] Virgil: *Georg.* i, 47; *Æneid* iii, 570 *et seq.*
[3] Livy: *ap. Serv. ad Georg.* i, 47.
[4] Pliny: *Nat. Hist.* ii, 103–6; iii, 8–14.

It is Strabo, who, among the ancients, gives us the best description of the mountain.

"Near to Centoripa," he says, "is the town of Ætna, which serves as a place for travellers, about to ascend Mount Ætna, to halt and refresh themselves for the expedition. For here begins the region in which is situated the summit of the mountain. The districts above are barren and covered with ashes, which are hidden by the snows in winter: all below, however, is filled with woods and plantations of all kinds. It seems that the summits of the mountain are often changed by the ravages of the fire, which sometimes is brought together into one crater and at another is divided; at one time again it heaves forth streams of lava, and at another flames and thick smoke: at other times again ejecting red-hot masses of fire-stone. In such violent commotions as these the subterraneous passages must necessarily undergo a corresponding change, and at times the orifices on the surface around are considerably increased. Some who have very recently ascended the mountain reported to us that they found at the top an even plain of about twenty stadia in circumference, enclosed by an overhanging ridge of ashes about the height of a wall, so that those who are desirous of proceeding further are obliged to leap down into the plain. They noticed in the midst of it a mound; it was ash-coloured, as was likewise the plain in appearance. Above the mound a column of cloud reared itself in a perpendicular line to the height of 200 stadia, and remained motionless, there being no air stirring at the time; it resembled smoke. Two of the party resolutely attempted to proceed further across this plain, but, finding the sand very hot, and sinking very deep in it, they turned back, without however being able to make any more particular observations, as to what we have described, than those who beheld from a greater distance. They were, however, of opinion from the observations they were able to make that much exaggeration pervades the accounts we have of the volcano and especially the tale about Empedocles, that he leaped into the crater, and left as a vestige of his folly one of the brazen sandals which he wore, it being found outside

at a short distance from the lip of the crater, with the appearance of having been cast up by the violence of the flame; for neither is the place approachable nor even visible, nor yet was it likely that anything could be cast in thither, on account of the contrary current of the vapours and other matters cast up from the lower parts of the mountain, and also on account of the overpowering excess of heat, which would most likely melt anyone long before approaching the mouth of the crater; and if eventually anything should be cast down, it would be totally decomposed before it was cast up again, what manner of form soever it might have had at first. And again, although it is not unreasonable to suppose that the force of the vapour and fire is occasionally slackened for want of a continual supply of fuel, still we are not to conclude that it is ever possible for a man to approach it in the presence of so great an opposing power. . . . By night a glowing light appears on its summit, but in the daytime it is enveloped with smoke and thick darkness." [1]

Such was Etna in the last years of the Republic. The whole country was then in a devastated and deserted condition, as another passage of Strabo's tells us, and given over to horse-breeders, herdsmen and shepherds, who preyed upon the decayed cities. And Strabo relates how one of these brigands, Selerus, called the son of Ætna, was captured and "torn to pieces by wild beasts in the Forum after a contest of gladiators; he had been set upon a platform fashioned to represent Mount Ætna, which being suddenly unfastened and falling, he was precipitated amongst certain cages of wild beasts which had also been slightly constructed under the platform for the occasion." [2] Strabo says he saw this.

It is obvious, however, that in spite of the violent activity of the mountain at this time and the deserted condition of the country, Etna was ascended, and it seems from the town of Ætna which probably stood on the site of S. Maria di Licodia above Paternò. That Etna was frequently ascended in Roman times is certain; for we not only have the tradition that the Emperor Hadrian climbed the

[1] Strabo, B. vi, Cap. ii, par. 8. [2] *Ibid.*, par. 6.

volcano, but there remains in the so-called Torre del Filosofo a building dating from that time which may well have been set up for the expedition of Hadrian.

Etna of course changes with each eruption, but the description of Strabo is accurate enough as far as it goes. The volcano is a truncated cone, interrupted on the east by the Valle del Bove, an appalling and sterile abyss, three miles wide and between 2,000 and 4,000 feet deep. Here was perhaps the original crater. The mountain is divided into three zones: the *Regione Coltivata* reaches to about 3,000 feet and extends beyond Nicolosi; the *Regione Nemerosa*, the region of forest which extends to about 6,800 feet, say to the Casa del Bosco; and the *Regione Deserta* from about 6,800 feet to the summit. Each of these zones, however, may be sub-divided. The first, the cultivated region, divides itself into a lower part, where the olive will flourish, and the upper part, where the vine and the almond are at home. The forest region too divides itself into a lower region where the oak, the chestnut, the beech and the evergreen pine flourish, and an upper where little else but the birch is seen. In the highest zone, up to 8,000 feet, a very stunted vegetation still exists, but above that height there is nothing but black desert, and there the snow lies for the greater part of the year. But these limitations must not be taken too exactly. There is an enormous difference between the north and south sides of the mountain, for instance, and chestnuts will be found at all heights up to between 5,000 and 6,000 feet, the vine will be found at over 3,500 feet, and the orange and lemon cease at about 1,000 feet only for lack of water.

An expedition to the great crater of Etna can only properly be made in the full or late summer when the snow is gone from the mountain-side, and good and, above all, calm weather is assured. It is a very fatiguing business and, what is more, very monotonous, and though if you have the luck to get a clear sunrise from the summit, the reward is great, this has not been my good fortune, and altogether I rather doubt whether the ascent is worth the time and energy expended.

It is some 30 miles from Catania to the summit and may be reckoned as follows: to Nicolosi 12, to S. Niccolò d'Arena 2, to the Casa del Bosco 8, thence to the crater 8.

Nicolosi, where you find your guides and mules, and where the ascent really begins, is a village of about 3,500 inhabitants. It is well to sleep there and to visit the Monti Rossi, the twin peaks, an excursion of an hour and a half. From the left peak you get a great view and not least of the lava of 1886.

The ascent of Mount Etna will not occupy less than seven hours on mule back. During the first four hours you pass through the forest region past the Casa del Bosco, a long, low building at the base of Monte Rinazzo, surrounded by many small craters, to the Casa Cantoniera under La Montagnola, about 6,150 feet above the sea, and an hour above the Casa del Bosco. It is possible to sleep at the Cantoniera, but not, I think, without permission from the Club Alpino Italiano; at any rate one can always find water there.

The dark and lofty peak to the right behind the Cantoniera is the Montagnola (8,700 feet), the head of the Serra del Solfizio, which closes with its tremendous cliffs the Valle del Bove in the south. You climb up and round the north end of this awful abyss by the Piano del Lago, under Monte Frumento, to the left, past the Rifugio Gemmellaro, a refuge built by the Observatory in case of the necessity of a swift retreat. You are now well into the desert zone, the landscape is quite lunar in its utter emptiness, and you are delighted to reach the Observatory at last, an hour after leaving the Rifugio Gemmellaro.

Here you can sleep or at least lie down if you have come to see the sunrise, until the guide calls you. The Observatory is about 1,000 feet from the summit, which must now be reached on foot, in about an hour, climbing with ever-increasing difficulty, slipping in the dark volcanic dust and rocks, in which are many smoking rifts, on which one looks with increasing aversion and misgiving. One is conscious of the height, of the smoke above one, and in my own experience of ever-growing misery and fear of the wind, the wind, the wind! The crater itself I have never

been lucky enough to see with any real clearness, exactitude or composure. The wind and the cold numb the intelligence. One is conscious of a vast cone rolling up and over into an unthinkable abyss which I was told was now divided into two parts, one of which I could see was streaming a vast cloud of smoke. I was not allowed, even had I had the wish, to approach its dreadful verge.

It was not possible to remain in such a place for long, nor in fact was it worth the discomfort and the uneasiness it caused one after the weariness of the way. The view is often said to embrace the whole island and even to include Malta—I saw nothing of this. The wind stretched the vast cloud of smoke like a flag across the whole flank of the mountain and screened the shore. I saw the coasts of Sicily and Italy from beyond Messina to the Lipari Islands, and the shore southward to Catania, Augusta, Syracuse, and Capo Passaro. I saw the winding Symaethos and the Lentinian fields and lake. Looking inland I descried Castrogiovanni, the Madonie and, perhaps, Mount Eryx.

But not for a view of the Delectable Mountains or the Promised Land would I have remained in such a place, crouched as I was on the hot grit to avoid being blown off the mountain or into the dreadful abyss, and now in real fear of the height, of the cold, of the wind—above all of that accursed wind. No, for me Etna, the beast Etna, has little to offer but immense fatigue, discomfort, continual uneasiness, and now and then an overwhelming fear, which engenders an active dislike.

There remains that vision, the exquisite ghost I have seen from Taormina, from Lentini, from Syracuse, a mountain in a dream, perfect, immaculate, in unearthly beauty, and, as that journey taught me, for ever out of reach. Have I lost that vision for ever by my rash and barbarous attempt? Who knows? There is nothing to be gained by climbing Etna: there is much to lose.

CHAPTER V

ON THE WAY TO SYRACUSE

THE journey from Catania southward to Syracuse is surely one of the most interesting in Sicily, and, for me, certainly one of the most beautiful. The vast plain upon which one enters immediately after leaving the city, which indeed seems to beat against its walls, is the greatest and the richest in the island, the very home of Demeter, a wide sea of living green in spring, of golden wheat and stubble in summer. To-day those infinite cornfields are scattered with the wild flowers of Persephone. For Spring is come between sunrise and sunset. Yesterday in Catania it was still winter—for winter comes even to Sicily—while to-day Spring is suddenly here, not timidly as in the North, her tremulous footsteps brushing the last snow from the yellow crocus, but amid an infinite riot of wild flowers that the south wind has strewn before her feet. A light of a divine transparence, subtilely and puissantly warming, caresses the laughing shore and envelopes and bathes the plain with its radiance. The vast green plain seems to stretch away for ever between the far hills and the purple sea into the slowly closing arms of the mountains. There is no building in sight, nor even a human being ; only the white approach of the wind over the tender green of the cornfields, and everywhere before it have run the flowers, campions, speedwells, valerians, poppies, marguerite daisies, yellow or white, anemones purple and white and rose, and that Adonis flower of which Bion sings. The only trees seem to be that line of Eucalyptus along the railway, a sinister hint that explains perhaps the total absence of all habitation. But who on such a day would spoil his pleasure

by a thought of malaria, at least till nightfall, and when twilight comes I shall be safe in Siracusa.

It is easy to-day and in this place—joyful with wild flowers now, to be golden with harvest later—it is easy to believe the ancient tradition that Sicily was the original home of Demeter and Persephone; that it was here the Goddesses first revealed themselves and were first worshipped, ages before Eleusis was founded, and gave the gift of corn to mankind. Here indeed it was that Demeter first produced that wheat which, according to Diodorus, such was the fertility of this soil, in Sicily alone grew wild, as the olive grew, without tillage.

But it is not only or even chiefly with the flowers and the sea, even on such a morning as this, that one's eyes are full. Ever more lovely, ever more lofty, as you make your way across the great plain, Etna rises behind you, rises quite out of the sea in one perfect and unbroken line from base to summit, from the incredible blue of the Ionian to the pure snow upon the crater, from which the great white plume of smoke lies across the infinite sky.

This view of Etna, which first on one side and then on the other, fills half a morning or afternoon, is one of the noblest and most beautiful anywhere to be had. One can scarcely lift one's eyes from it to look again on that radiant plain or for a moment to watch that herd of goats wandering along the sunlit shore while the little goatherd plays with the waves that lace all that silver beach. Indeed so much does Etna fill your eyes that you scarce notice as you pass a considerable stream, the Symaethos of the poets, that of old marked the frontier between the territories of those two Chalcidic cities Catana and Leontinoi, nor, a little later, that sheet of shallow water abounding in fish, which now lies beneath the broken hill of two summits with a hollow between, upon which Leontinoi stood. A little stream, the Lissus, now called the Lentini, flows about the hill to the north and loses itself in the malarious marsh by the sea.

Leontinoi is no more. Not a stone of the Greeks seems to remain. It stood on these hills of which the two summits formed natural citadels and made an important

fortress. It was founded from Naxos, the first of her colonies, in 730 B.C. We know little of its early history, but the strength of its position and the fertility of the great plain at its feet, renowned in all ages, gave it prosperity, and these excited continually the cupidity of Dorian Syracuse. Against the envy of that great metropolis, the greatest city perhaps in the Mediterranean, how could Leontinoi stand? Her history indeed resolves itself into the story of her repeated fall and repeated rescue. And as in other similar cases the things which are not brought to naught the things which are. For it was the appeal of Leontinoi by the rhetoric of her citizen Gorgias which first brought the Athenians into Sicily against Syracuse to such fatal purpose, to such tragic and irremediable disaster at last. And when this was accomplished Leontinoi became just a fortress such as Acræ was, in the hands of Syracuse upon her northern border: a citadel and a look-out over the wealth of the great plain and the highway of the sea.

It is of these things that I thought as I wandered about the old ruined mediæval castle, *il Castellaccio*, which stands it is said upon the chief acropolis of Greek Leontinoi: how the novel rhetoric of Gorgias persuaded the Athenians to interfere in Sicilian affairs to such utter disaster for us all. For if the Athenian Expedition had never set out, or, setting out, had succeeded, it may be Rome might never have conquered the world and our civilization would be Greek instead of Latin.

But even before arriving at Leontinoi, indeed upon crossing the Symaethos, one has reached the hills, the Syracusan limestone, the foothills of the Hyblæan Mountains. One is here really within the natural territory of Syracuse, a country stony enough to give it a definite Greek character, and with surprises beyond counting of beauty and riches and joy.

Once round the Xiphonian Promontory, that to-day they call Capo S. Croce, the whole famous Gulf of Megara lies before you, with Thapsus in its arms, closed on the south by the Promontory of Trogilus, Capo di S. Panagia and though hidden, Syracuse itself.

There is nothing certainly in Sicily, and perhaps in the world, more moving than the first sight of this great gulf with its storied promontories and peninsulas, its stoniness, the amazing and arid strength of its landscape, where once, and perhaps twice, was decided the destiny of the world. The first sight of this shore, where every feature bears a household name, dearer far and lovelier than anything Roman can ever be, catches the breath and fills the eyes more surely than even its own loveliness and strength could do. And for those for whom this is the first Greek landscape they have seen with their mortal eyes the effect is overwhelming. For Sicilian though it be, the landscape is Greek; it has the Greek stoniness, the Greek leanness of form and nobility of outline, the grey of the Greek olives, the asphodel, the anemone and the sea. Beyond the bare cliffs of that far tableland the Hyblæan Mountains shine.

As you come into this wide bay, you are struck at once, as though some great epic story known from boyhood had come true for you at last, with its almost remembered and strangely characteristic features—the great harbour of Megara there under the northern promontory, the site of Megara beyond it, whose walls you may still trace and whose spoil you may find in the Museum of Syracuse; the white town of Augusta, a foundation of Frederick II in 1232 that has replaced the Megara of the hills; the strange low peninsula ending in the Promontory of Thapsus behind which lay the Athenian fleet when Nikias stormed Epipolæ; the little bay of Trogilus where the Roman ships lay at anchor when Marcellus conquered Syracuse for Rome; and then the now desolate heights of the great city itself, Epipolæ, Tyche, Achradina; and at last the Island of Ortygia, Syracuse itself, with the Little Harbour to the north and beyond the Great Harbour within Plemmyrion.

That bare and stony landscape with its ancient olives, those heights and promontories, that desolate upland, that island which still bears the city—I say they are sacred, and to see them with these mortal eyes, having seen them since boyhood with the eyes of the mind, is overwhelming;

and for this too, because they are a part of the soul. In some way not easy to explain they are more than the well known and beloved places of home, because in them the imagination has most been used to dwell, and all our ideas of honour, of courage, of nobility and sacrifice, our sense of what is tragic in human life and in history, in large part there abide.

And as our fathers marching with the great armies when they first saw Jerusalem were wont to kneel down and hold out their arms in longing, satisfied at last, so we, beholding for the first time these hills, this shore, this city, sacred too, may bow the head lest men see the tears in our eyes.

CHAPTER VI

SYRACUSE

I

SYRACUSE

AS you come to Syracuse to-day, in the midst of a stony desolation only half hidden by the fragile beauty of the passing blossom, the loveliness of innumerable wild flowers, you find that great city which men called Pentapolis shrunk to scarcely more than a confused huddle of houses upon the little island that was her first foundation.

That great Dorian city, the scene of the most successful and the most disastrous defence in history, hallowed by the footsteps of Æschylus, the beauty of Philistis, the voice of Plato, the verse of Pindar, of Simonides, of Theocritus—what has become of it? It might seem incredible that a city of 500,000 inhabitants, whose walls measured some twenty miles round about, can have been utterly swept away. Whither is it gone?

There remains upon the island of Ortygia the greater part of one Temple and the foundations of another: in Neapolis in the plain upon the mainland, the ruin of the Theatre, a vast Ara, an Amphitheatre of the Roman time and the so-called Palæstra, together with a street—the Street of Tombs. But upon the plateau—on Achradina nothing, on Tyche nothing, a road, the foundation of a building, on Epipolæ the ruined walls of Dionysius and the enormous foundations, galleries and broken towers of his fortress of Euryalus.

It is there I think upon that stony plateau that once was Syracuse, where all that is left is a meagre pasture for goats

and sheep, where the asphodel and the olive alone are at home, that one wonders most. What has become of it all? Where is it gone? They cannot have carted away the very stones of the streets, the very foundations of the walls and the houses. Has the sun broken even these into dust? Has the wind blown the dust into the sea?

No; the greatest of Greek cities, the most beautiful of all cities, is not even a ruin: it has utterly passed away under the energy and the neglect of man, the endless days of scirocco, the centuries of summers, the countless winters' rains. And Time, eater of all things, has consumed even the dust of what was once so great.

Ah, but it remains . . . it remains in the mind, in the beloved pages of Herodotus, the truthful pages of Thucydides; and, yes, in the heart . . . for ever in the heart, in the idylls of Theocritus.

And so lying there on Epipolæ many an afternoon, lazily turning over their pages, while the shepherd passes below me with his sheep or the goatherd wanders with his goats under the olives, and I have only to lift my eyes to see Ortygia and the Great Harbour or Thapsus, standing up out of the sea, little by little it rises before me the Syracuse of old.

For in such a place, the whole site of the great city beneath me, it is easy to understand how strange and beautiful was its situation and, as I am come to discern, of a unique advantage.

There, some three miles away, like a boat at the launch, lies the island, Ortygia, where Syracuse was founded, between the Great Harbour to the south and the Lesser Harbour to the north. Behind me again some three miles away towers up the high and precipitous tableland of the Hyblæan Mountains—Monti Climiti. Between those mountains and the island lies this lofty triangular plateau surrounded on two sides by the sea, and on the south falling away more gently to the wide valley and meandering course of the Anapus amid meadows and groves famous for their beauty.

Standing thus as she did upon this lofty and often precipitous plateau, defended by the sea and the marshes

of Anapus, and easily protected towards the mountains where the plateau narrows like the prow of a ship and the Fort of Euryalus stands up before the loftier Belvedere, Syracuse must always have been impregnable, and was in fact never taken save by treachery.

She possessed two harbours: the Lesser Harbour which lies to the north of the Island, small and shallow, but convenient for all the shipping of her time, and the Great Harbour to the south, a vast sheet of water nearly six miles in circumference and almost, but not quite, enclosed by Ortygia and the peninsula of Plemmyrion; the entrance indeed is but 1,200 yards across, and everywhere within the water is at all times deep enough to admit the largest modern vessels. It is perhaps the finest harbour in Sicily.

But there is much more than this.

Lying as she did so far southward upon the eastern coast of Sicily, Syracuse commanded two seas, the Ionian and the African, and that not at one, but at two, crucial points: the entry into the Strait of Messina, and the Malta Channel, the narrows of the Mediterranean itself, between Sicily and Africa. Thus the strategic advantage of her position was pre-eminent and it remains such that it might seem certain Syracuse will re-arise, and we may perhaps expect to see the whole territory between the peninsula of Plemmyrion and the Xiphonian Chersonese turned into a great naval and aerial fortress commanding not only the Strait of Messina but the Mediterranean at its narrowest passage.

Far be that day! For who then could dream of Greece amid the ruins of Epipolæ, while the bees flitted through the ivy? Or who then in the orchards of Anapus would watch the almond blossom give place to the tender green of the leaf, as lovely if not lovelier? Or who, if such befell, under the stars on the stony slopes by the sea, while the goats stray among the ruins of Dionysius, would listen to the goatherd piping his ditty of low tone?

II

THE STORY OF SYRACUSE

Syracuse was a Corinthian colony established from the city of Corinth by Archias, son of Euagetes, of the great family of Bacchiadæ. As Praxinoa says, in the fifteenth idyll of Theocritus, "If you must know we're Corinthians by extraction—we Syracusans—like Bellerophon himself. What we talk is Peloponnesian. I suppose Dorians may speak Doric, mayn't they?" Certainly the Syracusans of all ages always regarded themselves as of pure Corinthian origin, and what is more, they maintained the closest relations with the mother city.

The colony was founded in 734 B.C., the year after the establishment of Naxos, and upon the Island of Ortygia. And just as Naxos was dedicated to Apollo, so Syracuse was dedicated to Artemis, the name of the island being hers; but the city seems almost at once to have taken the name it was ever afterwards to bear, as it would seem from the adjoining marsh, Syraco.

Of the early history of the city we know nothing; but it certainly flourished, for we find it establishing forts and colonies within a hundred years of its foundation: Acræ (Palazzolo) in 664 B.C., Casmenæ in 644 B.C., and Camarina on the south coast in 599 B.C.

The government of Syracuse at this time was in the hands of an unstable oligarchy called the Geomori, the descendants of the original colonists. About 486 B.C., however, the democracy succeeded in expelling it, but the despot of Gela (Terranova), Gelon by name, espoused the cause of the exiles and in the following year, 485 B.C., made himself master of Syracuse.

Gela at this time was certainly a more powerful state than Syracuse. Hippocrates, its late despot, had made himself master of many of the cities of eastern Sicily, among them of Camarina, which he had repeopled from Gela. Gelon however seems at once to have understood the superior geographical advantages of Syracuse, for no sooner was he master than he removed the new citizens

of Camarina in a body there and a little later more than half those of Gela itself; and seizing also Sicilian Megara and Euboea he brought all their more wealthy citizens into his new capital. In every way he strengthened and adorned Syracuse so that in his hands it became without question the first of the Greek cities of Sicily.

He was only just in time. The conspiracy of Xerxes with the Carthaginians for an attack upon Europe was completed. Herodotus tells us how the Athenians and Spartans in fear for Greece sent an embassy to Gelon to ask for his assistance—a sufficient compliment to his power. He refused, for he seems to have been aware, though they apparently were not, that the Carthaginians had undertaken to attack the Greeks in Sicily at the same time as Xerxes attacked Greece proper. So it befell: and we may hope that the tradition is true which records that the victory of Salamis and the victory of Himera were won on the same day in the autumn of 480 B.C.

The attack of the Carthaginians upon Sicily was made in this wise. In 481 B.C., Terillus of Himera, in the north of Sicily, had been expelled by Theron, who had lately established himself as despot of Acragas (Girgenti). Terillus thereupon conspired with the Carthaginians who sent a vast fleet and army under Hamilcar, and sailing to Panormos (Palermo), laid siege to Himera, then in the hands of Theron, who was able to defend it until Gelon arrived with an army of 50,000 foot and 5,000 horse. This force, though far less than the Carthaginian, was enough. All day as the battle raged Hamilcar threw burnt offerings upon the fire, till at evening news reached him that his army was defeated, whereupon he threw himself on to the fire—whether as the most costly gift of all or in despair history does not record.

This great victory of Gelon's was not less famous among the Sicilian Greeks than those of Salamis and Platæa among the Athenians and Spartans. The vast number of prisoners taken at Himera and distributed among the cities of Sicily added to their wealth and resources, and their labour no doubt explains the great works presently undertaken in Syracuse, in Gela and in Acragas.

Nor was Gelon merely a great soldier and administrator. By his patronage of Letters and the Arts he rendered Syracuse famous and the resort of poets and artists. Among the guests of his court and that of his successor were Æschylus, Pindar and Bacchylides; while Syracuse itself gave birth to Sophron, whose *Mimes*—and he was the inventor of *Mimes*—were the glory of Dorian Comedy, and to Epicharmus, the chief comic poet among the Dorians, who first gave to comedy a regular plot. Though his childhood was spent in Megara he passed his best years at the courts of Gelon and Hieron. It is mainly to that successor Hieron that we owe the marvellous medallions and coins, never equalled for beauty, which distinguish Syracuse above every other city even of Greek Sicily. The silver Demareteion, struck in commemoration of the Carthaginian defeat by Gelon and coined out of the treasure given to Gelon's wife Demarete by the Carthaginians, is perhaps the most beautiful medallion in existence.[1] It was the first of a whole series scarcely less lovely of which those by Kimon and Evaenetus struck in commemoration of the Athenian defeat sixty-seven years later are especially beautiful. It was too no doubt at this period that the famous Temples and Theatre of the city were built, and the city itself established upon the mainland, not only in Achradina and Tyche but in Neapolis.

But fragile are the thrones of princes, especially, one may think, Greek princes. Hieron was succeeded by his brother Thrasybulus, who proved himself a tyrant, and the Syracusans expelled him in 466 B.C. After many dissensions a democracy was established and there followed about sixty years of free government during which Syracuse developed with great rapidity both in wealth and power. "All Sicily," says Diodorus, "grew in prosperity, and, enjoying profound peace, cultivated its fertile soil, saw its wealth increase, filled itself with slaves, with flocks and

[1] *Obverse:* Victory crowning the horses of a chariot; below the lion of Carthage in flight. *Reverse:* Head of Victory surrounded by dolphins and within the word ΣΥΡΑΧΟΣΙΟΝ. There is no example in the Museum at Syracuse. It may be seen at the British Museum.

herds and every kind of well-being; the revenues grew because they had no war to sustain." [1]

There followed the most miserable, the most unfortunate and the most tragic event in the history of Syracuse, even in the history of the Greeks, and perhaps in the history of Europe: the Athenian Expedition.

Thucydides relates that adventure precisely like a Greek tragedy. It has its cause and its effect: things done have an end; for the crime committed upon the Melians, an act of insensate and evil folly worthy he seems to suggest of those who conceived the attack upon Sicily, there is the Nemesis of Syracuse. To read those calm and truthful pages is to be present at a great ceremony, to be a spectator, as in the theatre, of a greater tragedy than any imagined by Æschylus, by Sophocles, by Euripides; to share a vision of something which seems to be fatal in the world, in the acts of men, in the very nature of things; and to witness the mind of the gods in action and the justice that is theirs.

But that is not the only way of looking at this most wonderful event. If we regard the expedition from a political point of view we shall not be so hard upon Athens.

In the first place it was a definite action in the Peloponnesian War: it was quite natural and right that Athens should wish to make her sea power predominant in the west: the whole political situation demanded it.

And then the most serious and dangerous hostility which Athens had to face was the commercial rivalry of Corinth, the mother of Syracuse, the head of the Dorian cities of Sicily. A counter to Corinthian influence in Sicily and Italy was a necessity. Politically the Athenian Expedition was justified.

Nor was it rash from the military point of view. All the chances were in its favour. The failure and the fault lay not in the conception of the expedition but in its execution. Nikias was the ruin of the Athenian Expedition. Had the advice of Lamachus been taken and Syracuse attacked at once Syracuse would have fallen. Had Alcibiades not been recalled the attack would have been pushed on and Gylippus

[1] Diodorus xi, 72.

would never have been dispatched from Sparta. Had Nikias, even when Lamachus was dead and Alcibiades in Sparta, completed the north wall upon Epipolæ, Gylippus would never have reached the besieged and Syracuse would have fallen at last. The fault was Nikias', who was supine and irresolute when he should have been active and bold, who shirked responsibility when he should have staked his life: the failure was due to nothing in the character of the expedition but to everything in the character of the leader. And since he was the choice, confirmed again and again by the Athenian democracy, theirs was the fault and the folly in which their whole polity was, alas, to perish.

I must not here relate the famous story over again. Every schoolboy has been present upon the heights of Epipolæ, watched the great naval fight from the Theatre of Syracuse, and wept with the captive Athenian youths in the depths of the Latomiæ.

It must be enough to say here that the Athenians, urged to it by the unstable genius of Alcibiades, in the middle of the Peloponnesian War, in a moment of truce, grasped at the domination of their world and determined to fit out a vast expedition, both naval and military, to besiege and take Syracuse, the greatest city in the Mediterranean, in the hope of thus seizing all Sicily, then Carthage, and finally the Peloponnesus—in fact the Mediterranean.

The immediate pretexts for the expedition were a quarrel between Selinus and Segesta, in which the Athenians espoused the cause of Segesta against Syracuse, which supported Selinus; and an appeal from Leontinoi for justice against Syracuse.

The first armament that Athens launched in this affair —it was doubled later—was the costliest and most splendid that any city up to that time had ever sent forth. It sailed at midsummer in 413 B.C., and the whole of Athens went down to the Peiræus at dawn to see the spectacle. There were 134 triremes and an immense number of smaller vessels; there were 5,100 hoplites, and a total number of more than 30,000 combatants, but no cavalry.

One can see with the mind's eye that great and beautiful

armament racing to Ægina, sailing round the dreaming headlands of Greece, crossing the Ionian sea from Corcyra and coasting along the far stretched gulf of Magna Græcia. But from the very beginning misfortune dogged the Athenians.

Even before they sailed they had been delayed by that sacrilegious outrage upon the Hermæ, of which Alcibiades had been accused, which alarmed the superstition and perhaps the piety of Athens. And now they could find no city in all Magna Græcia to receive them and give them a market till they came to Rhegium, and even there they were not admitted within the walls. And here it was they discovered that the wealth of Segesta, which was to finance their enterprise, did not exist.

So there at Rhegium the three commanders, Alcibiades the soul of the expedition, Nikias its weakness, who had advised against it, and Lamachus, the least of the three but a soldier, took counsel.

In that counsel Nikias proposed to shew the armament of Athens to the Syracusans and by its mere prestige to get justice if possible both for Segesta and for Leontinoi, and then to return to Athens. Alcibiades proposed to negotiate an alliance with the Sikelian natives and to persuade the Greek cities in Sicily to come to their side and then to attack Syracuse. Lamachus was a soldier. He proposed to seize Megara as a base and to attack the Syracusans forthwith. There can be no doubt that he was right, and had his plan been adopted it would have been successful, Syracuse would have fallen, and the whole history of Europe might have been different. But he was the least of the three, and when he saw that his colleagues would not adopt his advice he gave his vote for the plan of Alcibiades.

So Alcibiades had his way. Naxos and Catana were persuaded to their ruin, and a demonstration was made in the Great Harbour of Syracuse.

Then befell the third misfortune. Alcibiades was recalled to Athens to answer the charges of mutilating the Hermæ and profaning the Eleusinian mysteries. Instead of returning, he escaped his escort at Thurii, made his way

to Sparta, where he appeared as the avowed enemy of his country, and began his terrible revenge.

Nikias, now the unquestioned leader of the expedition, wasted the rest of the year in futile enterprises. When winter came he roused himself for a moment and by some stratagem lured the Syracusan army to attack his camp at Catana while in the meantime he had embarked his host and sailed for the Great Harbour. There he landed and won a victory over the Syracusans who had hastily returned, but this done he re-embarked and returned to his base at Catana.

Meantime in Sparta Alcibiades had revealed the plans of the Athenians and urged the dispatch of that most energetic and most fortunate soldier Gylippus to the assistance of Syracuse.

At last with the Spring Nikias made a move. The fleet left Catana, entered the bay of Thapsus and landed the army at the foot of Epipolæ on the north. The soldiers rushed up the steep slope, none opposing, and were masters of the open plateau. There, where upon that north slope the escarpment first turns due east, they built their fort Labdalon ; but Alcibiades would have fortified Euryalus. The siege of Syracuse had begun.

The Athenians' plan was to shut the city off from all assistance by land, as their fleet was doing by sea. To this end they began to build a wall from the northern escarpment of Epipolæ to the Great Harbour. They began by erecting a circular fort in the middle of the plateau, and from this they purposed to build a wall north and a wall south.

The Syracusans, untrained and undisciplined, attempted to stop them, but failing in this they in their turn began to build a counter wall to intercept the southern wall of the Athenians : but this the Athenians soon swept away. It was successful in this however that it drew the attention of the Athenians off their north wall, and, as we shall see, it was the north wall that was crucial. Through that gap Gylippus was to enter.

The Athenians now began to fortify the southern escarpment of Epipolæ near the Temple of Herakles, as part of

the work on their south wall. The Syracusans then began a fortification much further down ; they dug a huge trench defended by a palisade right across the marsh of Lysimeleia behind the Great Harbour, from the gate by the Agora to the Anapus. The Athenians attacked and destroyed it, but in that encounter Lamachus was slain—Lamachus who was a soldier ; and Nikias, already ill, was left in sole command. Yet he was happy, for he thought the city won. The southern wall was advanced in a double line and the fleet left Thapsus and entered the Great Harbour.

In that hour news came to despairing Syracuse, by the mouth of a Corinthian captain : Corinthian ships were on the sea and a Spartan General even then at hand.

It was at Locri that Gylippus learned that Syracuse might yet be saved, that the north wall of the Athenians was not completed, and he and his force, supplied by half the Greek cities of Sicily, might enter. By the very path of the Athenians he scaled Epipolæ by night, and without opposition, by way of Tyche, entered the city.

Immediately he took command. His first act was to seize the fort Labdalon, his next to begin a new counter wall extending from the walls of the city at Tyche along the whole length of the plateau to Euryalus which he fortified. The new wall met the Athenian north wall at right angles, and there was a race in wall-building in which the Syracusans were the winners. This was really the decisive act in the siege. Nikias certainly thought so and wrote to Athens for large reinforcements. They were prepared and sent. Meantime Nikias occupied and fortified the headland of Plemmyrion, but the Syracusans, who still held the Olympieum, attacked his fort and took the position. This was decisive in another way, for it meant that Syracuse now held both the headlands that enclosed the Great Harbour in which lay the Athenian fleet. In fact in a naval encounter there the Syracusans were completely victorious, and were about to push their advantage when the Athenian reinforcement arrived under Demosthenes.

Demosthenes turned his attention to Epipolæ, but Gylippus had there strengthened his wall with forts and Demosthenes' attempt failed. This, Demosthenes considered as

decisive and he advised the abandonment of the whole enterprise. Nikias however even now could not bring himself to make a decision.

The Syracusans had now become the aggressors. They attacked the Athenian fleet in the Great Harbour and cut off and destroyed the right wing. Then it was they conceived the idea of the annihilation of the whole. They began to block up the mouth of the Great Harbour by mooring ships across it from Ortygia to Plemmyrion.

The Athenians saw their doom. They abandoned everything on the heights and assembled in the naval camp near the Olympieum. There it was that they watched the fleet make the final effort to break through the barrier of the Syracusan ships and reach the open sea.

Thucydides describes that tragic scene: "While the naval engagement hung in the balance the two armies on shore underwent a mighty conflict and tension of mind. The fortune of the battle varied and it was not possible that the spectators on shore should all receive the same impression of it. For since the spectacle they were witnessing was close at hand, and having different points of view, while some would see their own ships victorious and their courage would revive and they would call on the gods not to take from them their hopes of deliverance, others would see their ships worsted and would cry and shriek aloud more utterly unnerved than the men who were actually fighting. Others again whose gaze was fixed on some part where the battle was even, moved by the long-drawn uncertainty and the awful suspense, would move their bodies in their excitement and fear in accord with their opinion, for they were always within a hair's breadth of escaping or perishing. And so you might hear in the Athenian army at once lamentation, shouting, cries of victory or defeat, and all the various sounds which are wrung from a great host in the extremity of danger. Not less agonizing were the feelings of those on board, till at length the Syracusans and their allies, after a protracted struggle, put the Athenians to flight . . ."

The Athenian fleet was utterly annihilated. Nothing now remained to Nikias but retreat by land to neutral

territory. Even this was delayed, so that when he set out by the pass beyond Floridia he found it blocked at the Acræan Rock and had to return and take the Helorine Road. Upon that road he and Demosthenes were overtaken upon the banks of the Asinarus near Noto and were compelled to lay down their arms. The whole army was then destroyed and seven thousand state prisoners were brought back to Syracuse and imprisoned in the Latomiæ, where most of them perished of want, pestilence and exposure. Nikias and Demosthenes the Syracusans put to death.

"Thus ended the greatest of all Hellenic actions—the most glorious to the victors, the most ruinous to the vanquished; for they were utterly and at all points defeated and their sufferings were prodigious. Fleet and army perished from the face of the earth; nothing was saved, and of the many who went forth few returned home."

Thus ended the Athenian Expedition.

That amazing victory placed Syracuse at the head of all the Greek cities in Sicily. She took her vengeance upon Leontinoi, Catana and Naxos, which had admitted the Athenians, and then turned to meet a new foe—the Carthaginians—whom the Segestans had now invited to support them against Selinus.

In 410 B.C. the Carthaginians began their new attempt to destroy the Greek cities of Sicily. They overthrew both Himera and Selinus and in 406 B.C. fell upon Acragas and destroyed it. It was now that Dionysius, still a young man, made himself tyrant of Syracuse, turned Ortygia into a fortress for himself, constructed docks in the Lesser Harbour, built the great fort of Euryalus and walled Epipolæ. This was achieved in time. In 397 B.C. he declared war on Carthage, marched from one end of Sicily to the other, laid siege to their great stronghold Motya and took it, and though he lost it in the following year and was forced by Himilco to retreat upon Syracuse, he shut himself up in that fortress and held out till by a lucky stroke he was able to defeat the Carthaginians by sea and land and consented to their departure from Sicily. And though Mago in 393 B.C. renewed the attack it was with no better

success. Dionysius remained master of the city, and with leisure to make himself master of Greek Sicily.

It was now Syracuse reached the zenith of her power and prosperity. Though his government was oppressive and especially in his latter years, when he became extremely suspicious, Dionysius contributed much to the greatness of the city and displayed his magnificence at the Olympic games and sent rich presents to Olympia and to Delphi. He was not only the patron of artists and men of letters but himself repeatedly contended for the prize of tragedy at Athens, where he several times obtained the second and third prizes and finally bore away the first prize with a play called *The Ransom of Hector* at the Lenaea.

As a patron he is famous for having entertained Plato, at Syracuse, as his son did after him, and though the story of his having sold him as a slave is probably untrue, he presently sent him home in disgrace, while he confined Philoxenus the poet in the Latomiæ for having criticized his bad verses. None of these remain to us, but his walls and fortress upon Epipolæ are his enduring monument.

He was succeeded by his son Dionysius the Younger in 367 B.C. This man had neither the energy nor the ability of his father, and the government of Syracuse soon fell into chaos. In 356 B.C. Dionysius being in Italy, his son Apollocrates was compelled to surrender the fortress of Ortygia to Dion, the friend of Plato, the representative of the people of Syracuse. But when it was seen that he did not restore the liberties of the people he was presently assassinated, and we find Dionysius still in possession of the fortress of Ortygia when in 344 B.C. Timoleon landed in Sicily.

After the death of Dion the most terrible disorders prevailed, not only in Syracuse but throughout Sicily. Carthage was preparing to take advantage of this state of affairs, when the Syracusans sent an embassy to Corinth, their mother city, to ask for assistance. The Corinthians consented and Timoleon was chosen to take command of the expedition.

Timoleon belonged to one of the noblest families of Corinth. A passion for the freedom of the state had

involved him in the most tragic misfortune, namely the murder of his elder brother, who would have made himself master of Corinth. Timoleon killed him with his own hand, and was consequently by no means reluctant to leave his native city. In fact the Corinthian senate appointed him to the command of the Sicilian expedition with the provision that if he conducted himself justly in the command they would regard him as a tyrannicide and honour him accordingly, but if otherwise they would punish him as a murderer. As it proved Timoleon behaved in the most exemplary manner. Arriving in Sicily with but ten triremes and seven hundred mercenaries he succeeded after much hard fighting and the crushing of many plots, especially the machinations of Hicetas, tyrant of Leontinoi, in decisively defeating the Carthaginians on the Crimissus in 339 B.C. and in restoring liberty to every Greek city in Sicily. Though he was in reality the ruler of Sicily, for every state consulted him in every matter of importance, he refused to make himself despot anywhere, and lived as a private citizen, refusing any office—even in Syracuse, where he was regarded almost with worship and which he held in the hollow of his hand. He repeopled the cities of Acragas and Gela which the Carthaginians had destroyed. Once when his public conduct was attacked in the assembly he replied by thanking the gods for answering his prayer that the Syracusans might enjoy freedom of speech. A short time before his death he became blind, but the Syracusans continued to honour him as before and took his advice upon every occasion. He died in 337 B.C. in the eighth year after his arrival in Sicily. He was buried in the Agora, where his monument was afterwards surrounded with porticoes and a gymnasium and was called after him the Timoleonteum. He was certainly one of the greatest among the Greeks of his time.

The period following the restoration of Timoleon was one of great prosperity for Syracuse but within a single generation the city had fallen under the tyranny of Agathocles, which lasted from 317 B.C. to 289 B.C. Agathocles too adorned the city with splendid buildings, but after his death anarchy returned, till in 275 B.C. Hieron II made

himself master. He reigned till 216 B.C. wisely and moderately, and, after a first encounter, in alliance with Rome now at grips with Carthage. Rome in 267 B.C. recognized Hieron II as king of Syracuse with the dependent towns of Acræ, Helorus, Netum, Megara, Leontinoi and Tauromenium. His reign was one of the most fortunate periods in the life of Syracuse. Theocritus, first among many poets, adorned his court, and the city attained its highest degree of splendour and magnificence.

His grandson Hieronymous succeeded him and made the fatal error of exchanging the alliance of Rome for that of Carthage, and during the Second Punic War, in spite of the assassination of Hieronymous, Carthage maintained her ascendency. The two Syracusan captains, Hippocrates and Epicydes, shut the gates against the Roman general Marcellus and compelled him to begin the famous siege in 214 B.C. which lasted for more than two years.

That siege is chiefly memorable for the achievements of Archimedes of Syracuse, who by his superior science and skill destroyed or sunk the Roman ships with his engines. Marcellus had established a fortified camp at Leon on the shore of the bay of Thapsus, and it was from the little cove of Trogilus and perhaps by the Scala Greca, the hewn flight of steps on the north of Tyche, that he scaled the height, seized the gate at Hexapylum and stood at last on Epipolæ. One by one the forts and the quarters of the city fell into his hands from Euryalus to Neapolis, till only Ortygia remained. This held out till it was betrayed to him by a Spaniard named Mericus who had been entrusted among others with the defence. Marcellus behaved cruelly and gave up the whole city to pillage, and in the confusion Archimedes was accidentally slain. The plunder was enormous, and it is said that the works of art, the pictures and statues which Marcellus carried to Rome to adorn his triumph, gave the Romans their first sight of the beauty of Greek art.

From this time Syracuse became a mere provincial town in the Roman system. But the barbarity of Marcellus in stripping the city might seem to have been exaggerated, for Verres, as Prætor of Sicily in 73-71 B.C., found plenty to

loot there, and Cicero, who impeached him in 70 B.C. in his famous oration *In Verrem*, calls Syracuse "the greatest of Greek cities and the most beautiful of all cities." Certainly all the great buildings, the works of more than a thousand years, still remained, and the great quarters of the town, Ortygia, Achradina, Tyche, Neapolis, were still crowded with houses and inhabitants.

It was not Marcellus but Sextus Pompeius the son of the Triumvir who in 42 B.C. destroyed and dispeopled Syracuse, inflicting upon it injuries from which it never recovered. Little by little the mainland quarters were abandoned, and such was the decayed condition of the place that we find Augustus trying to repeople it and confining his efforts to the island and the part of the city immediately adjoining it in Achradina and Neapolis, where we still see the considerable remains of Roman buildings, such as the amphitheatre, and of Roman restorations of Greek works, such as the Theatre.

So Syracuse continued a city of provincial importance and a strong place in the administration of the Empire and of Byzantium till in the year A.D. 878 it fell into the hands of the Saracens, the last city of Sicily to do so, and its citizens were one and all put to the sword, its fortifications destroyed, and the whole city burnt to the ground. From this calamity it never recovered; it merely continued to exist in the thousand years twixt then and now in the desolation we see to-day, the Island alone really inhabited, Achradina, Tyche, Neapolis and Epipolæ, its glory and its strength, dispeopled and uncultivated, a spare pasture-land of sheep and goats, from which for the most part even the ruins have crumbled away.

III

ORTYGIA

However you come to Syracuse to-day, whether from the railway station, or from Villa Politi down the slope of Achradina, or by road from Catania or Girgenti, you find

yourself, on entering, in the great waste place, covered with stray stones, rubbish and dust, and crossed by various and uncertain tracks, which was of old the Agora and the Forum of ancient Syracuse. Before you lies the Island—Ortygia, with the Lesser Harbour and the Great Harbour on either side, behind you lies Neapolis, to the left rises the plateau of Achradina with Tyche and Epipolæ above it, while behind the Great Harbour lie the marsh of Lysimeleia and the mouth of the Anapus, and beyond, Polichne and the Olympieion, and closing it on the far side the headland of Plemmyrion. This desolate and neglected open space, that was the Agora of the ancient city, is still as it were the key to all that is left of it.

Vast as it is, it was of old vaster still, and surrounded by the most beautiful porticoes, which the elder Dionysius had built and of which Cicero speaks. Some fragments of broken columns surrounded by a sort of cage are, it might seem, all that remains of them. But the Agora certainly included the Timoleonteum, the monument and tomb of Timoleon, the beautiful remains of which are still to be seen in the so-called Ginnasio Romano behind the railway station. The Agora was closed towards the Island by a great fortified gate called the Pentapyla. This has disappeared. To-day you pass on to the island through a wide unobstructed modern street, Corso Umberto I, and crossing the bridge over the dock enter the Piazza Pancali.

The Island of Ortygia, always the heart and soul of Syracuse, belonged to Artemis; it was always consecrated to her and it bore her name, for she was said to have been born in the grove of Ortygia near Ephesus. Diodorus tells us that when Persephone was a child in Enna, or ever Hades carried her away, she had for playmates the young Goddesses Artemis (Diana) and Athena (Minerva) and all three maids were vowed to virginity. They played together in the fields of Enna, gathering flowers, themselves the fairest flowers, and made a robe for their father Zeus. And living there they looked upon Sicily as their home and each by lot chose a spot to be peculiarly her own. To Athena Himera fell, to Persephone Enna itself, to Artemis the Island of Ortygia.

So the original seat of the colony which throughout its history remained the citadel and Acropolis of Syracuse was sacred to Artemis.

Unlike most citadels it lay not above but below the rest of the city, its strength residing in the fact that it was an island : about a mile in length and less than half a mile in breadth, composed of rock, and later joined to the mainland by an artificial causeway and defended there by that fivefold gateway the Pentapyla, behind which, facing the outer city, the elder Dionysius constructed his great castle or fortress adjoining the docks in the Lesser Harbour. The fortifications of Charles V, which still remain, occupy it might seem much the same position.

And since the Island was sacred to Artemis, "The couch of Artemis" as Pindar calls it, its chief temple was hers. Some remains of it may be seen, perhaps, not far from the Piazza Pancali, in the Via Diana, laid bare in 1862. It was the most ancient Doric Temple in the Island and perhaps in Sicily, peripteros-hexastyle but with at least nineteen columns upon each flank. There still remain two complete columns upon the south, and fragments of others and of the architrave.

Much more considerable remains may be found of the other temple which Cicero particularly notes as adorning the city in his day. This is the Temple of Athena, and its fortunate preservation to us is due to the fact that it has become, with scarcely more than the necessary additions, the Cathedral Church of the city, S. Maria delle Colonne. This transformation seems to have been first accomplished in the seventh century of our era by the Bishop Zosimus, who filled up the interspaces of the columns with walls, and consecrated the building for Christian use.

The Cathedral stands on the highest ground in the island in a large piazza, Piazza del Duomo, at the other end of the Via Cavour from the Temple of Artemis. Save upon the north side you would not suspect from without that this was an ancient building at all, but there the great Doric columns and capitals are visible, and within the baroque building of the eighteenth century you may see much of the cella and may count certainly twenty-four of the

thirty-six columns which upheld the Temple. For this too was a peripteros-hexastyle temple raised upon a platform of three steps, 185 feet long by 75 feet broad, with fourteen columns upon each flank, dating from the sixth century B.C., and according to Diodorus, built under the government of the Geomori before Gelon came to Syracuse.

It was too one of the most magnificent temples in Sicily. Its doors were covered with plates of gold and ivory and their beauty was famous throughout the Greek world. Within were many paintings, among them, according to Cicero, a series representing a battle of cavalry in the wars of Agathocles against Carthage and a series of portraits of the Despots and Kings of Sicily. On the summit of the Temple without was a shield, the shield of Athena ; and this was the last thing the Syracusan sailor saw when he left home ; for the southern sun shone full upon it and he was wont, it is said, in some ritual of his, to hold in his hands a vessel filled with fire from the altar of Hera so long as the shield of Athena was visible to him.

Marcellus, when he gave Syracuse up to be plundered, spared this temple, but Verres took away all he could, the plates of gold and ivory from the doors, the pictures, the sculpture : Cicero especially mentions a lovely head of the Gorgon with snakes for hair.

As one stands there to-day when the church has been stripped with some intention of restoration, it is with the secure knowledge that one or other of the gods has been worshipped in this building for not less than two thousand five hundred years without break or intermission. When the Parthenon at Athens was built by Pericles this temple was already more than a hundred years old. The nave of the present church was the cella of Athena, its font the sacred *cratera* in the Temple of Dionysos, over its threshold be sure Gelon and Dionysius and Timoleon have passed, and in the shadow of its columns Æschylus, Plato and Theocritus have stood. It was already old when the Athenian fleet was destroyed in the Great Harbour close by, and its antique beauty saved it when Marcellus won the Island for Rome, and seeing how venerable it was and how dear to the gods, prevented its destruction. Nothing

CATHEDRAL, SYRACUSE

else that remains in Syracuse can properly be compared with it.

And indeed so far as the island is concerned, at any rate there is nothing else at all belonging to antiquity—unless it be the Fountain of Arethusa: but that has been so restored, built about and "beautified" that it is scarcely worth a visit.

O Fountain Arethuse . . .

It is not Milton alone who invokes what ages before his day had come conventionally to be the pastoral fountain of all fountains. Was it even Theocritus who began it, Theocritus who in his first idyl makes Daphnis address part of his farewell, *Χαῖρ' 'Αρέθοισα. . . .*

For assuredly Theocritus as well as Homer was beloved of the fountains, and if the blind man ever drank of the Pegasæan Fount Theocritus had drained a draught of Arethuse. And then there is Virgil—if he indeed deserves in such company to be so much as mentioned at all—Virgil with his

Extremum hunc, Arethusa, mihi concede laborem.

But what did he know about it? The too smooth rhythm of the line belongs to "smooth sliding Mincius": his true fount: for his eclogues are no more than

Mechanic echoes of Sicilian song.

"Return *Alpheus. . . .*"

"Divine Alpheus who by secret sluse
Stole under Seas to meet his Arethuse."

Yes, we can here dispense with Virgil. There is no room for him. Greek and English poetry have celebrated Arethusa, and the lovely song of Theocritus is not lovelier than the English:

"Return *Alpheus*, the dread voice is past,
That shrunk thy streams; return *Sicilian* Muse,
And call the Vales, and bid them hither cast
Their Bels and Flourets of a thousand hues.
Ye valleys low where the milde whispers use,
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart Star sparely looks,

Throw hither all your quaint enameld eyes,
That on the green terf suck the honied showres,
And purple all the ground with vernal flowres.
Bring the rathe Primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted Crow-toe and pale Gessamine,
The white Pink, and the Pansie freakt with jeat,
The glowing Violet,
The Musk-rose and the well-attir'd Woodbine,
With Cowslips wan that hang the pensive hed,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears;
Bid *Amaranthus* all his beauty shed,
And Daffadillies fill their cups with tears,
To strew the Laureat Herse where *Lycid* lies."

The Greek language itself could not bear Theocritus above Milton there.

Who does not know the story of the river god Alpheus, a river of Elis, and the nymph Arethusa? How she, pursued by Alpheus, was brought by Artemis here to Ortygia and metamorphosed into a fountain: and how he pursued her under the sea and there mixed his waters with hers; so that when sacrifices were offered at Olympia, when the river there was stained with blood, then too the Fountain Arethusa was stained also. And a silver cup thrown into the river in Elis would be found later in this fountain in Ortygia.

That delightful story and the immense fame of the Fountain should surely have saved it a little from the neglect of the past and the attention of to-day. It is now carefully walled and grated about, planted with papyrus —why papyrus?—and filled with fat grey mullet.

Nothing could be less Theocritan. Give me the quays and the sharp acrid smell of the fish stalls of Syracuse, the dark cavernous hovels of Achradina, the olives of Epipolæ where the goatherd will share with me a cheese of Sicily, and I may play with his golden cicala in a little cage of rushes. Or give me the fat pastures of Anapus where there is a wood of sweet almonds not far from the sea, where Thyrsis pipes even yet. In all these places I shall find Theocritus; but at the Fountain of Arethusa . . .? No, what Virgil did to the Idylls, the Syracusans themselves have done to their Fountain. . . .

The Fountain of Arethusa overlooks the Great Harbour,

indeed stands close to the extreme point of the island upon this side, opposite the great headland of Plemmyrion. From here the Syracusans closed the harbour mouth with their chained ships, from one point to the other, imprisoning the Athenian fleet which they then destroyed.

Close by and actually upon the seaward extremity of the island is the Castle built by the Byzantine Captain, George Maniaces, in 1038 and added to from time to time so that you have a fine Gothic doorway and window of the fourteenth century, a ruined Gothic hall and much work of the time of Charles V. This Castle was built upon the site of a temple of Hera. Here was the altar from which the departing sailor took the fire which he only flung into the sea when he lost sight of the shield of Pallas on the top of the Temple of Athena. Not a stone of this Temple remains, nor of the Hexecontaclinus of which Diodorus speaks, a building of Agathocles, the massive granaries of which Livy tells us, the palace of Hieron where the Roman Prætors, among them Verres, lived. Nor is there any trace of the Greek walls. The remains of a tower however may be seen on the north side in the Lesser Harbour.

There is left modern Syracuse. This is far more interesting and charming than at first appears. The narrow mediæval-looking streets of the place are full of picturesque bits, a courtyard here, a balcony there, a window, a doorway, and one or two buildings are beautiful and charming.

The Palazzo Montalto for instance, just out of the Piazza Archimede, with its Gothic windows of the end of the fourteenth century ; the Palazzo Bellomo at the end of the Via Roma, the main street of modern Syracuse, a fine building of the fifteenth century where the mediæval collections belonging to the Museum are now collected ; the Palazzo Lanza with its lovely windows of the same period, in the Piazza Archimede ; the Palazzo Interlandi and the Casa Mezzi in Via Gelone : these are but some of the more striking buildings left in modern Syracuse from a better time for building than our own. But altogether they do not amount to very much. The chief interest of the place remains Greek, and one finds it difficult to realize that it ever had any other life.

This impression is certainly confirmed by a visit to the Museum in the Piazza del Duomo.

The Museum of Syracuse, Museo Nazionale, is in many ways the most important in Sicily, though it has little that will greatly interest the ordinary traveller. It is indeed rather an archæological museum than a museum of fine art, but it possesses a number of objects, chiefly Greek sculpture in marble and terra-cotta which from the æsthetic point of view give it a considerable importance and cannot but delight even the most casual visitor.

The Museum owes its origin to a cultured Syracusan, the late Cavaliere Saverio Landolina Nava who, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, made a collection of objects which he himself had excavated. These formed a nucleus and in 1811 a small archæological museum was inaugurated. The people of Syracuse assisted with gifts from time to time and a learned ecclesiastic, the Canon Lentinello, having formed a fine collection of Greek coins, this was acquired by the Commune upon his death and has been much augmented since by Professor Paolo Orsi, the present Director. To Professor Orsi indeed the Museum owes much of its present importance and usefulness. It is to him and to his predecessor Cavallari that by far the greater part of its prehistoric objects—its pre-Hellenic collections—are due and the splendid arrangement of everything and its display. Here at least it is easy to see and even examine everything that is shown.

On the ground floor are arranged the larger objects, and the inscriptions, the architectural fragments, the sarcophagi, among them a famous one from the catacombs of S.Giovanni. Here too is collected what has been found of Greek sculpture and statues—astonishingly little you might think till you remember the infinite loot of Rome and the wars of the Byzantine and the Arab. Even so one receives a very poor impression of the artistic wealth of this Greek pentapolis, for even among those few things the best have been brought here from outside. That torso of a youth for instance (23624 in Sala VI) of the early fifth century B.C. comes from Leontinoi; those two funereal reliefs from Acræ; those fine sarcophagi of terra-cotta with their

internal decorations from Gela ; and we are left with the magnificent colossal bust of Poseidon, the colossal bust of Persephone from the shrine at the Fount of Cyane, and a broken fragment of a priestess wearing the peplum which we presume to come from Syracuse itself.

But the most famous statue in the Museum is undoubtedly Syracusan : though it is not Greek but Roman, a late copy or derivation of the work of Praxiteles—Aphrodite Anadyomene.

Guy de Maupassant has written many pages in enthusiastic praise of this work, and that is exactly what one might have expected. It is, he explains, woman exactly as she really is, as one likes her, as one desires her, as one wishes to take her in one's arms.

" Elle est grasse, avec la poitrine forte, la hanche puissante et la jambe un peu lourde, c'est une Vénus charnelle, qu'on rêve couchée en la voyant debout. Son bras tombé cachait ses seins ; de la main qui lui reste elle soulève une draperie dont elle couvre, avec un geste adorable, les charmes les plus mystérieux. . . . Ce geste simple et naturel, plein de pudeur et d'impudicité, qui cache et montre, voile et révèle, attire et dérobe, semble définir toute l'attitude de la femme sur la terre. Et le marbre est vivant. On le voudrait palper, avec la certitude qu'il cédera sous la main, comme de la chair. Les reins, surtout, sont inexprimablement animés et beaux. Elle se déroule avec tout son charme, cette ligne onduleuse et grasse des dos féminins qui montre dans la rondeur décroissante des cuisses et dans la légère courbe du mollet aminci jusqu' aux chevilles, toutes les modulations de la grâce humaine . . . Ce torse admirable, en marbre de Paros, est, dit-on, la Vénus Callipyge décrite par Athénée et Lampride, qui fut donnée par Héliogabale aux Syracusains. Elle n'a pas de tête ! Qu' importe ! Le symbole en est devenu plus complet. C'est un corps de femme qui exprime toute la poésie réelle de la caresse . . . Elle est divine, non pas parce qu'elle exprime une pensée, mais seulement parce qu'elle est belle."

All this seems quite true and quite obvious and rather boring, like the statue, which may explain much in late manners that is difficult to understand : it certainly explains

one's preference for the older, the archaic Greek art and why one ceases to be much interested after Pheidias. Yes, all this is quite true. And what does it mean? Does it not mean that this statue is so realistic that it has almost ceased to be a work of art?

On the upper floor are arranged the true riches of the Museum: the loot from the necropoli, from Pantalica, Castelluccio, Melilli, Augusta, Noto, Modica, Ragusa, Terranova, Pachino, Plemmerio, Thapsus, Caltagirone and a host of other places. Much, indeed most, of these infinitely various objects, vases, cups, lamps, tear-bottles, tomb furniture, votive offerings, bracelets, necklaces, rings, needles, jewellery, flint knives, bronze weapons and so forth are prehistoric and will have nothing to say to the ordinary traveller.

Far more charming is the Ceramica di Siracusa and Megara in Sala XII, the Ceramica di Gela and Camarina in Sala XIII and above all the lovely terra-cottas from Syracuse, Megara Hyblæa, Centuripe, Grammichele, Gela and Acragas in Sala XIV, XV and XVI. Many of these *figurine* among them the exquisite *Danzatrice* in Sala XV, the lovely veiled figure in Sala XIV (Arm. V. 1557), the dear little figure of one loosing her sandal in Sala XV (9527) are of the very finest art of Greek Sicily, if indeed they do not come from Greece proper: while the exquisite heads, of Demeter for the most part, possibly votive, are unequalled in the whole island. These wonderfully modelled heads are generally archaic, of the most exquisite and delicate workmanship, and are quite as lovely as the pre-Periclean statues in the Acropolis Museum at Athens, though those are in marble and these in terra-cotta. It is admirable to see with what great works of art the Greeks in Sicily were continually surrounded even in the ordinary ways of life: it is humiliating to realize that there is no one alive to-day who could make such things, or even conceive such beauty: no not though the reward were to be a king's ransom. Nor for that matter are there many to feel the need of them.

IV

ACHRADINA

The original foundation of Syracuse had been upon the Island of Ortygia. Its first extension upon the mainland, its first quarter, of those four, of which it at length came to consist there, was Achradina.

Achradina stretched from the Agora and the Marsh of Lysimeleia on the shore of the Great Harbour, over the eastern portion of the northern plateau where it meets the sea in lofty and precipitous cliffs of limestone. It included the whole of the eastern part of that plateau as far as the harbour of S. Panagia and within it were some of the most ancient and the finest buildings of the city, for it was the most important and the most extensive quarter of old Syracuse. It divides itself naturally into two parts, that which lies in the plain and that which lies upon the table-land. The whole was thickly populated and early defended by a wall, parts of which still remain upon the edge of the cliffs between the two small islands, scarcely more than rocks, of the Due Fratelli and the bay of S. Panagia.

That part of Achradina which lay in the plain immediately opposite Ortygia included the Agora, the Lesser Harbour and the Great Harbour, with the dockyards and arsenals. It had at least one outer gate—the gate leading to Gela which Cicero calls the Portæ Agraginæ, a title that seems to have puzzled modern historians, though it might seem clear enough as named from Acragas, Girgenti that is, long before Cicero's day a far more important place than Gela, and standing, though more distant, upon the same road. Its situation however cannot be determined, and this is doubly unfortunate, for just outside it, Cicero tells us he found the neglected tomb of Archimedes.

Of the buildings of Achradina mentioned by Cicero, it is not only this gate and the tomb outside it which we miss; scarcely one of them remains. Of the Agora proper, with its cloisters—porticoes—*pulcherrimæ porticus*, as he calls them, nothing whatever remains save the fragments of columns gathered together in that cage on the waste

ground, and the Timoleonteum, which is fortunately in great part left to us. But where was the Temple of Olympian Zeus which stood here near the Agora, built by Hieron II, which must not be confused with the older temple to the same divinity at Polichne beyond the Anapus? Where was the Prytaneum, the common house of the state, where a perpetual fire was kept burning upon the altar and where important state guests were housed and entertained? Not a vestige of it would seem to remain. Yet it was of the greatest beauty and possessed a famous statue of Sappho which Verres stole away. It was a work of Silanion and one of the finest things anywhere to be found. And where was the Senate House which also stood here in Achradina?

Nothing of all this is to be found to-day except the Timoleonteum, just behind the railway station on the road to Noto. It was the great sepulchral monument erected by Syracuse to the memory of Timoleon, the most noble of her rulers and restorers. It consists of a palæstra, and close by is the base of a great construction, the mausoleum of Timoleon, with many fragments of exquisite workmanship, pieces of cornices and capitals and carving.

One leaves it with reluctance, and crossing once more the dusty Agora, makes one's way uphill to Villa Politi which stands over the only other monument of the Greek time left in Achradina: I mean the great Latomia dei Cappucini, certainly the finest of these vast excavations which are so characteristic of Syracuse.

The Latomie of which there are the Latomia di S. Venera the Latomia Casale, the Latomia del Paradiso, and this called after the convent of Capuchins close by, were the quarries of Syracuse, from the stone of which the whole city was built. The word is as old as Thucydides, who tells us that the many thousands of prisoners taken by the Syracusans after the defeat of the Athenians and the destruction of their fleet and armies in 413 B.C. were imprisoned *ἐν ταῖς λιθοτομίαις*—in the stone quarries. At first he says they were treated harshly by the Syracusans. Crowded as they were in large numbers in a deep and narrow place, by day the sun and the suffocating heat caused them distress, there being no roof; while the nights

THE LATOMIA DEI CAPPUCCINI

were on the contrary autumnal and cold so that the sudden change engendered illness. Besides they were so cramped for space that they had to do everything in the same place ; moreover the dead were heaped together one upon another, some having died of wounds, others from the changes in the temperature or like causes, so that there was a stench that was intolerable. At the same time they were oppressed by hunger and thirst—the Syracusans having for eight months given them only a half pint of water and a pint of food a day ; [1] and of all the other ills which men thrown into such a place would be likely to suffer there was none that did not befall them.

Some of those thus confined would recite a chorus or a speech from the poets to the jeering multitude who looked down upon them, and a few of these, partly by reason of their skill, partly by reason of the beauty of the verses, were released, and others taken into the service of some wealthy Syracusan or even allowed to return to Hellas. It was, we are told, the verses of Euripides which most moved the Syracusans to mercy, and some of those who owed their lives to the genius of the poet returned to Athens and thanked him.

Those vast quarries, more than a hundred feet deep and open to the sky, have for long now been planted with every sort of tree and flowering shrub and turned into the most lovely of sub-tropical gardens where the wind can never spoil the blossom and many a tall cypress counts the hours. It was the Cappucini who began this marvellous transformation, taught no doubt by nature and by chance : they used this place so vast, so great, so secluded, as a place of hermitage almost, where one might lose oneself and the world. Others have bettered what they began, till to-day the Latomia is a paradise where all the winter long without fear of the wind one may lie in the sun, in a wonderful garden of flowers, amid cascades of bougainvillæa where avenues of cypress make a shade and the olive and the agave and the cactus grow among the fantastic precipices. But for all its beauty and silence one is never happy there for long. It seems to be haunted by the

[1] This was half the amount given to slaves.

ghosts of those Athenian lads who starved there in scorn so long ago, and its silence is broken by their sorrowful voices. It is strange that of all the deeds of Syracuse, so many of them beautiful, heroic and patient, it should be this cruelty that is remembered, that cannot be put out of mind; so that the very name of the city heard to-day in a far country brings back at once those Athenian youths reciting Euripides to a jeering multitude.

Other Latomie there are in Achradina which are worth a visit, though none I think so beautiful and certainly none of so poignant a memory as the Latomia dei Cappucini. The road past the Villa Politi and the second road out of it to the right lead to one of them, the Latomia Casale, with its beautiful cypresses. Thence following the same road past S. Giovanni, the first road to the left brings one to the Villa Landolina in another small Latomia.

That church of S. Giovanni is as it happens by far the most interesting church in Syracuse, as it is the most picturesque. A ruin you might think as you note its broken gable, porch and beautiful rose window, and in fact what you see there is all that remains of the church of 1182. But once within, a flight of steps descends to something far older than the restored church above ground. Here is not only the church or crypt of S. Marciano, but vast catacombs larger than those of Rome, and, more interesting still, the stylobate of a Greek temple, the Temple of Dionysos, with some of the bases of the columns.

The church or crypt of S. Marciano, where you may still see the tomb of that saint who here suffered martyrdom, and certain remains of rude frescoes, is said to have been that in which S. Paul preached when on his way from Jerusalem to Rome after his appeal to Cæsar. He came in the *Castor and Pollux* from Malta where he had wintered three months, "and landing at Syracuse we tarried there three days."[1] It would be more interesting to stand

[1] Acts xxviii. 12. Three days! The usual sojourn of the tourist in Syracuse. One wonders what S. Paul did in Syracuse. He might have seen the city still in its glory of Temple and Portico. But I suppose, like Gallio on another occasion, he cared for none of these things. That is what annoys one so much in reading this Apostle who had such fine opportunities of seeing some of the

in this place if, as we see it, it did not date rather from the fourth century than the first. However, for those who are interested in such things—and who is not ?—the catacombs hard by will reward any amount of trouble to see. Not that they really differ from those in Rome, save that they are larger and less cramped—the main passage being ten feet wide—and have several large circular halls which you do not find elsewhere.

These catacombs date I suppose from the fourth century ; but earlier may be found a few yards away at S. Maria di Gesù, which date from the middle of the third century, and these are the oldest in Syracuse. No one knows the extent of these curious burial places ; they are said to run for many miles in all directions. They inevitably recall the prehistoric tombs with which the whole island is honeycombed : so visibly in Sicily do the dead outnumber the living.

As well worth seeing as the church of S. Marciano or the catacombs of S. Giovanni is the church of S. Lucia which can be reached in a few minutes from S. Maria di Gesù. The church, dating from the eleventh century, of which however only the western entrance remains, is that of the patron saint of Syracuse, S. Lucia, the child who suffered here in the end of the third century. Like S. Agatha of Catania she is also always invoked at Mass, for her name too appears upon the diptych in the Canon. The church itself is devoid of interest, but you pass from it by a subterranean passage out of the south transept to the octagonal chapel, Cappella del Sepolcro, indeed the old Baptistery, which is now half underground. Here is a recumbent figure of the saint by some pupil of Bernini ; but more interesting by far, on the stairway leading into the chapel are two magnificent twelfth-century crucifixes which I am glad not to have missed. They are by far the most precious works of art in the city, apart from those of the Greek time.

loveliest things in the world. Even in Athens he behaved like a barbarian and does not seem to have liked what he took the trouble to see. And this was the man who was in possession in some sort of the religion of the future !

V

NEAPOLIS

It was from Villa Politi, again past Villa Landolina, that I made my way into Neapolis, which lies on the southern slope of Achradina towards the plain.

As its name implies, Neapolis is the New City, the latest quarter of Greek Syracuse, of which however it soon grew to be perhaps the most splendid part, as little by little the Island became more and more of a fortress. It originated in the suburb of Temenites, which was as old I suppose as Achradina and certainly older than the Athenian Expedition. Temenites grew up round the sanctuary of Apollo Temenites, the god, that is, "of the sacred precincts" and so I suppose of the wall. This temple or shrine seems to have stood on a height, possibly the height above the Theatre, and contained a precious statue of the god which Verres was unable to remove by reason of its size but which Tiberius is said to have carried off to Rome. Near by stood the Temples—possibly the double Temple—of Demeter and Persephone, but these, like the sanctuary of Apollo, have altogether disappeared.

Entering Neapolis as I did from the plateau of Achradina, the first thing I came upon lying back from the road on the left was the Roman Amphitheatre. This is a vast building in the form of an eccentric ellipse cut out of the hillside with an arena larger than that of Verona and very considerable remains. It lies charmingly amid gardens from which the whole building is very well seen. Probably a work of the time of Augustus, measuring 140 metres by 119, it was entered by a portal at each extremity and is surrounded by a lofty parapet above which the seats are cut tier above tier from the rock. In the midst is a large basin served from cisterns under the house of the custode on the other side of the road, possibly for *naumachie*, and vaulted corridors surround the arena under the parapet. Of all such buildings I have seen, among them those at Verona and Pompeii, this is by far the best built and the most charming: perhaps because it is in all probability the work of Greek builders.

After leaving the amphitheatre a walk of a hundred yards or so brought me to the entrance of the Latomia del Paradiso on the right of the road. It seems altogether to lack the charm of that of the Capuchins and indeed of S. Vènera and Casale, but if it has not the delicious beauty of those marvellous gardens it possesses in the "Ear of Dionysius" and the Grotto of the Rope Makers two interesting curiosities they cannot match.

The Latomia is a vast excavation in the rock of the plateau which here rises to a sheer height of about 130 feet, overhung by a most luxuriant growth and vegetation of all kinds. It was of course, like the other Latomie, one of the quarries of Syracuse. These vast excavations, useless for all other purposes, must have seemed especially adapted for prisons, and just as the Syracusans used the Latomia dei Cappucini as a prison for their Athenian captives, so were they all, and, it seems, from an early period, employed as prisons, and, later, as prisons for criminals from all over Sicily. Cicero speaks of them in this sense. "You have all heard," he says, "of the Syracusan stone quarries. Many of you are acquainted with them. They are indeed vast and splendid; the work of the old kings and tyrants. They are cut out of the rock, excavated to a marvellous depth by the labour of great multitudes of men. Nothing can be made or imagined so close against all escape, so hedged in on all sides, so safe for keeping prisoners in. Into these quarries men are commanded to be brought even from other cities in Sicily if they have to be kept in custody." [1]

He goes on later in his Oration against Verres to speak more particularly of this Latomia, which we call, it might seem in irony, "del Paradiso." At least I suppose it is to this Latomia he refers, as "that prison which was built at Syracuse by that most cruel tyrant Dionysius." Tradition at any rate is on the side of Cicero, and in fact the whole story of the "Ear of Dionysius" rests on no other foundation than tradition, which however is not traceable beyond the sixteenth century.

The story goes that Dionysius the Elder caused a cavern

[1] Cicero: In Verrem v, 27.

in the shape of an ear to be excavated in the loftiest wall of the Latomia, in such a manner that the softest whisper in the cave could be overheard by himself or his officer in an apartment above. There he intended to confine all his personal enemies or those whom he suspected of being so. And when all was well finished in order that his secret might be kept he put all the workmen employed upon it to death.

There is of course no foundation for this very pleasing story, nor in truth are the qualities of this cavern such as tradition ascribes to them. Like every one who has visited the place I was struck at once as I approached that vast excavation by the curious likeness the opening bears to a human ear and still more impressed by the enormous multiple echo within. A bugle blown there re-echoes again and again till you seem to hear a complete military band. A canon sung there resounds exquisitely like a phrase from a motet by Palestrina or Vittoria. A piece of paper lightly torn there sounds like the report of a rifle ; and the voice though it be no more than a whisper is like the voice of a multitude. Nothing more curious is to be found in Sicily : the effect being much greater though far less beautiful than the magical echo in the Baptistery at Pisa.

I was not able to ascend to the chamber where Dionysius is said to have sat to hear what was really thought of him, for I was told that it was inaccessible : but the custode assured me, and I can very well believe it, that the multiplication of sound is so elaborate and confusing that nothing said in the cavern can be distinguished above by reason of the confusion of sounds.

Quite apart from its supposed purpose, the Ear of Dionysius has much of interest, and can, should the traveller have the inclination, as I had, be put to an exquisite use by employing three or four singers to sing there, plain chant and *falsibordoni*. The effect is beautiful.

This cavern is 18 feet wide and 58 feet high and runs into the hill in the shape of a capital S.

A little farther on in the Latomia is the Grotta dei Cordari, a long pillared cavern often flooded, used by the ropemakers.

On coming out of the Latomia del Paradiso I found on the opposite side of the road the remains of the vast Ara of Hieron II. It is said to be 640 feet long and 75 feet wide, and is supposed to have served at the annual festival to celebrate the fall of the tyrant Thrasybulus in 466 B.C., when 450 bulls were offered to Zeus in sacrifice. But if that be so, I do not understand how it can have been built by Hieron II who reigned two hundred years after this event. Thrasybulus was the younger brother of Gelon and Hieron, the earlier tyrants of Syracuse. Perhaps Hieron II restored the altar; but why should he? Diodorus however distinctly suggests if he does not actually assert that the Ara was the work of Hieron. Possibly the true explanation may be that it was built to celebrate the deliverance of Syracuse and Sicily from tyrants by Timoleon. Diodorus [1] speaks of it generally as one of the great works which had been constructed in Syracuse as the result of the prosperity with which the pacification of Timoleon endowed Sicily: the whole passage is very general and therefore obscure.

And now on that wonderful spring day I came to what when all be said is by far the greatest and most moving Greek monument left in Syracuse—the Theatre. When I first saw those grey semi-circular tiers—tier above tier hewn from the hillside—I confess my heart came into my mouth. I think it must be so with every one and especially if, as was my case, this is the first Greek theatre he has seen. Before examining it closely I climbed up to the Nympheum above it, past the Torre del Teatro to see the view it embraced. There before me as before the ancient spectators lay the city itself, the island Ortygia visible in its whole extent and of course far less beautiful to-day than of old when its white painted temples rose up above the houses and the great gateway the Pentapylon closed the city. I saw the entrance to the Lesser Harbour, towered once, the Great Harbour in its whole extent as far as the farther headland of Plemmyrion, together with that low, curved shore, the whole vale of the Anapus and beyond the Temple of Olympian Zeus.

[1] Diodorus xvi, 83.

When I had seen all this—the noble background—but oh how changed—of every play, before which was performed alike the *Agamemnon* or the *Persians* or the *Œdipus* or the *Lysistrata* : when I had seen all this in the sunshine and thought a little upon it, I came down to the orchestra, and upon the site of the stage I began to examine this building certainly for us, at least as sacred as a temple.

This, like almost every other Greek theatre in the world is cut out of the hillside, here out of the face of the plateau, where it slopes steeply but not precipitously to the plain about a thousand yards from the shore of the Great Harbour.

Nearly semicircular in form the *theatrum* proper is hewn out of the rock in a series of sixty concentric semicircles of which forty-five remain, decreasing in size from the top to the bottom where the lower seats were covered with slabs of white marble. It is divided in its whole breadth by two passages or *præcinctiones* one broad and one narrow running round the *theatrum* parallel with the seats or benches. In these passages when the theatre was full many would stand, for the inner side of each passage formed a wall below the upper rows of seats and here in some theatres niches were hewn to contain bronze vessels to increase the sound of the voices coming from orchestra and stage. Through the rows of seats from top to bottom are built flights of steps by which the audience ascended from the lower to the higher seats. But these steps run in a straight line continuously only from one *præcintio* to another. Those in the next series of seats are placed just between the two flights of the series below. Thus these stairways divide the Theatre proper into a number of compartments or *cunei* so called because they resemble cones with the tops cut off. Some of these *cunei* are still inscribed in capital letters with the names of Hieron and the two queens Philistis and Nereis, with that of Zeus and Heracles and it is said with the epithet *Εὐφρών* which may have referred to the festive nature of the occasion : the feast of Dionysos.

Unfortunately the *theatrum* is incomplete here as everywhere else. The highest rows of seats are missing, and

GREEK THEATRE, SYRACUSE

of course the covered portico which rose above them and which probably helped to improve the acoustic qualities of the building. No roof covered the *theatrum* or the orchestra, but it is probable that, as in a bull ring to-day, awnings were stretched to shield the better seats, at any rate, from the sun.

The entrances to the *theatrum* were partly underground. Some of them are quite visible to-day and the upper rows were no doubt accessible from above.

The Theatre of Syracuse is not less than 440 feet in diameter and is said to have held 24,000 persons. It was thus not only the largest in Sicily as Cicero tells us, but larger than the theatre of Dionysos at Athens. It was however much smaller than the theatres at Epidaurus, Megalopolis, Argos and Ephesus.

The inscriptions I noticed on the *cunei* are evidently of the time of Hieron II who may well have restored the theatre, but it is far older than that. It seems to have been erected by Gelon or Hieron I in the fifth century B.C. If this be so, it is one of the oldest as well as one of the least imperfect in the world, though of course it has suffered restoration at the hands of the Romans.

Unhappily, though the orchestra remains, nothing at all is left of the stage. In the centre of the supposed circle of the orchestra stood the altar of Dionysos, the *thymele*, which was generally built of boards and was of course much nearer the stage than it was to the *theatrum*. It was ascended on all sides by steps and thus stood on a raised platform which was often occupied by the leader of the Chorus, the flute-player and the *rhabdophori*. The prompter or monitor was placed before this structure so that he faced the stage and was not seen by the audience. The Chorus was arranged round the *thymele* or rather between it and the stage.

Standing there in the silence of evening, in the midst of these ruins, these broken fragments, this spoiled but still sacred place, what voices one asks oneself have these stones heard, and to what words and to what verses have these walls re-echoed? Æschylus certainly has looked upon that *theatrum*, has stood in that orchestra; these

rocks have heard his voice. For the tyrant of Syracuse, Hieron I, we know, he wrote his lost play *The Women of Aetna*, we know that here in Syracuse *The Persians* was played, not indeed for the first time, but it was played together with the rest of the trilogy with which he had been victorious at Athens in 472 B.C. He also composed here other plays, but of which they were we are ignorant. No doubt this hill has heard the voice of the watchman, the cry of Agamemnon, and the lamentable voice of the daughter of Priam, whose throat the perfidious Clytemnestra cut beside him. The words of Antigone too, the voice of Electra : no doubt these walls have heard them. Nor have they forgotten the laughter of Lysistrata, surely an irresistible thing—after the failure of the Expedition to which it refers ; and the *Peace* and the *Birds*. . . .

Slowly the sun sets over the wine-faced sea ; purple is it or mixed gold and crimson ? Night is coming. In the tawny Street of Tombs it is already dark ; the glow of the gaunt honeycombed rock but makes darker the emptiness of the empty tombs. In the Nymphæum I can hear the water slowly running as it has run for thousands of years. Somewhere, darkling among the olives, the heavy laurels or the vines, somewhere a bird sings, ah, the nightingale . . .

Do you remember, do you remember, the words of Antigone in the Colonus ? χῶρος δ' ὅδ' ἱερός. . . .

> But where we stand is surely holy ground
> A wilderness of laurel, olive, vine ;
> Within a choir of songster nightingales
> Are warbling. On this native seat of rock
> Rest ; thou hast travelled far. . .

VI

EPIPOLÆ

There are two, in fact three, ways of approaching Epipolæ, the loftiest and most western part of the plateau, crowned at its farthest point by the greatest Greek fortress in the world, the Castle of Euryalus. For you may go by the

lower road, the "Old Road," under the southern escarpment of the tableland, the road to Floridia, and presently take a by-way up to Euryalus; or you may follow the road to Catania out of Syracuse and leave it for the "New Road" that follows the aqueduct, just before the Casa dei Gesuiti, and so proceed over the plateau itself within the southern wall of Dionysius, to Euryalus; or you may follow the Catania road right across the plateau and descend the northern slope by the bay of Trogilus; then just before you come to the Scala Greca you leave it for a by-way and proceed all the way under the northern wall of Dionysius between the plateau and the sea, to Euryalus at last.

Each of these ways has its own beauties and advantages. The "old road" gives you the valley of the Anapus and the farther hills; the "new road" by the Casa dei Gesuiti gives you something of the plateau and the valley too; the northern road by the Scala Greca gives you the sea and the sea shore, Thapsus and the olives that are older than Christianity, and infinite fields of flowers, the asphodel, the anemone. You go by one and return by another.

It was the wind that generally decided the matter for me, for if it was from the south I went under the northern escarpment but if from the north then I chose the "old road" to the south. The shadier and least dusty way is that to the north.

I shall not easily forget the first morning I drove out by Villa Politi and following the by-ways across Achradina came into the straight Catania road over Tyche and followed it. Presently just where the road began to turn we came to the northern edge of the tableland where it slopes steeply towards the sea. No one who has seen it can ever forget that view: it is not only beautiful in itself, but there is added to it something from the mind, some memory of what till then has only dwelt in the imagination, living there since boyhood from the pages of Thucydides. For that turn of the road suddenly gives you the whole of that storied shore; to your right the promontory of Trogilus, Capo S. Panagia, below you the little bay where the Athenians landed, the strange peninsula of Thapsus

under shelter of which lay the Athenian fleet, the blue Ionian as far as Augusta, the mountains of Hybla, and, over all, smoking Etna, a pyramid of snow floating in the sky. How often have I lain a whole morning through, in the shade of the trees there, in a world of flowers, Thucydides beside me and thought myself blessed.

But on that first morning I was for Euryalus. Slowly in sight of that sea we wound down the hill and presently leaving the Catania road followed the by-way on the left across a waste of fields scattered with the blue anemone, till, at a lovely turn of the way beneath the steep escarpment we halted under the olives, and we made our way through the tall asphodel up a slope of broken rock which presently became a vast flight of steps hewn in the limestone and leading to the summit—the Scala Greca.

There could be no doubt for a moment that this stairway was the work of man, the work of Syracuse, nor that it led to the northern or sea gate of Tyche, Hexapylon. And surely it was by these steps both the Athenians and the Romans climbed the height, the Romans from their fortified camp of Leon when after a siege and blockade of more than two years Marcellus at last succeeded in entering Tyche.

And now returning to the road we followed it ever more eagerly as winding among most ancient olives, closer and closer under the ruined walls of the escarpment, it climbed to the summit of the plateau, and there, in chaos now, but still in majesty, upreared Euryalus its broken towers threatening the soft sky.

It was from those towers and the great walls which still stand about them that I turned to the expected landscape.

To the west upon its narrow ridge stood up the look-out of the Belvedere, its village at its feet against the vast flat tableland thrust out like a promontory, of the Monti Climiti—the Thymbris of Theocritus. To the north, the sea stretched away to Augusta past Thapsus and the hills of honied Hybla. To the south lay the wide vale of the Anapus dusky with orchards, ramparted with mountains, among which here and there shone out a town, Floridia, Solarino, Sortino perhaps. And last to the east my eyes

sought Syracuse, the island of Ortygia and the Great Harbour between it and Plemmyrion. And all between lay the plateau Epipolæ—a vast emptiness guarded still by the ruined walls of Dionysius, and the dark ruin piled on ruin, the gigantic fortress of Euryalus.

But those walls—they seemed to stretch for miles, hewn stone tumbled upon hewn stone in enormous overthrow; squared block piled upon squared block, strewn down the steep slopes to north and south or standing, still indestructible, upon the escarpment. The transitory wind that blew shrewdly about them, the frail flowers whispering and blowing among them, the asphodel, the anemone, seemed to emphasize their permanence, their continuance; to establish their triumph.

Musing there upon the fortress it is easy to see what Epipolæ was. Epipolæ, literally I suppose the place "at the top" was at first all this great triangular plateau which gradually slopes down from its apex at Euryalus to its base upon the western wall of Achradina. But when the lower part of the plateau came to be inhabited and the quarters of Tyche and Neapolis established and drawn within the city, the name was confined to that part of it which lay outside them, the highest part of this table-land. And in fact Epipolæ altogether differed from every other part of the city, if only in this, that it never seems to have been populated. It was, so it might seem, nothing but a military quarter, walled on the north and south by the elder Dionysius and wholly dependent upon the great fortress at its peak. It was the outer defence of Syracuse, and, if not always as empty as it is to-day, never certainly covered with buildings, with houses, whose foundations you will seek in vain. There is nothing upon Epipolæ, nothing but its broken walls, its fortress, the shepherd and his sheep, the flowers and the wind.

Those walls however and that fortress are enough. They are together one of the most astounding Greek works in existence, and the fortress, Euryalus, is probably the best example[1] left us of an ancient fortress or castle designed both

[1] It may be compared with Eleutheræ above the road from Eleusis to Thebes in Greece proper.

as a citadel and as the apex of a defensive position; built here to secure the approach to Epipolæ from this quarter.

It was the wisdom of the elder Dionysius that established it. In truth the Athenian expedition had shown the vital necessity of a fortress at this spot and Dionysius, immediately upon his establishment as tyrant, began its erection. Not a moment too soon: for the Carthaginian onslaught which followed the Athenian defeat was flung back before it when it had laid low every other Greek city in Sicily. That defence proved its value as the head of the defences of Syracuse; its value as a citadel was demonstrated in the attack of Marcellus when Euryalus was held by a separate garrison after the capture of the walls of Epipolæ, threatening the army of Marcellus then attacking Achradina, in the rear.

Of most such places the fame exceeds the impression you receive when you see them. It is not so with Euryalus. As you pass up and down those vast subterranean corridors hewn out of the living rock or built of wrought stone, from court to court, from hall to hall, from chamber to chamber, from outwork to outwork, those five great broken towers rise up and seem to threaten the very sky; and as you gaze at it again from afar it seems to block the mind.

It is little that our modern artillery and high explosive would make nothing of its strength; it is everything that the weapons of its day, the sword, the spear, the bow, the catapult and the battering ram were obviously powerless to move it, and proved in fact less formidable than the wind and the rain. It has been too much even for the earthquake, and still stands there square upon earth, and to the seeing eye perhaps one of the most formidable things upon it.

It is good to clamber about those broken walls, to sit among those vast lines of ruin looking over Thapsus towards Megara, or over the Anapus to the Great Harbour and Ortygia, while through the long afternoon the shepherd leads his sheep among the stones from pasture to pasture. Wandering thus aimlessly from side to side I came by chance upon the one oasis of this beautiful desert that is Epipolæ. I mean the Latomia del Filosofo where it is

said that Dionysius imprisoned the poet Philoxenus for laughing at his verses. Dionysius did well, for looking upon these stones I cannot think him less than a poet. And then he could build with words too. His tragedies were not unsuccessful even at Athens, and did he not win the first prize at the Lenaea with a play called *The Ransom of Hector*? It had been a play of Æschylus too. Both are for ever lost. And all the verses of Dionysius like the verses of Philoxenus have perished: only these stones remain.

And so thinking of that ill chosen subject for a tragedy *The Ransom of Hector*, for indeed Homer has written it once and for all, and I wonder what even Æschylus could have made of it after those incomparable pages in the twenty-fourth book of the Iliad, I continued on my way afoot along the length of Epipolæ; the pasture land of sheep and goats. Infinite flocks there seemed to be moving across the tableland, and scarcely discernible among the stones, till you came almost upon them and the sheep dogs came barking and baying and circling around you showing their teeth. Fear quickened my memory and it came to me that I had learned how to deal with these brutes in the pages of Theocritus. So I stooped and picked up a stone and off they made yelping—baying as Theocritus says for the bayings sake.

And so I came at length to the Scala Greca and evening began to fall. And the shepherd and the goatherd came by and folded their flocks in the great caverns at the end of the day. But I waited there for the sunset to stain the snows of Etna and die upon the sea; till like an exquisite ghost, like a vision in a world beyond our sight Etna faded away and the sea itself might rather be heard than seen.

Then I made my way by the broken, walled roads, hither and thither, across Achradina, back to the city.

CHAPTER VII

ROUND ABOUT SYRACUSE

I

THE FOUNTAIN OF CYANE

OF all Sicilian cities I have loved Syracuse best, not only for its own sake, its so individual beauty, the nobility of its situation, its manifold treasures, its unrivalled past ; but also for the interest and delight of its landscape, the charm of its walks, the beauty of the surrounding country. And so I shall set down here for remembrance, very briefly, a few of the walks and excursions I like best.

Every one I suppose who comes on a visit to Syracuse, however brief be his stay goes to the Fountain of Cyane : that delicious source beyond the Olympieum in the wide vale of the Anapus.

It used to be the rule to visit this abode of the Nymph all the way by boat from the Great Harbour, but the canalization of the Anapus and its embankment has made this way of approach much less enjoyable than of old. It is usual now to drive all the way from Syracuse as far as the second bridge over the Anapus and there to take a boat for the all too brief journey up the Cyane stream.

You leave the city by the Noto road, past the Timoleonteum and after traversing the famous marsh of Lysimeleia cross the Anapus and the Cyane by the Ponte Grande. Once across the bridge you turn immediately to the right up the high embanked stream, and in about a mile, after passing the railway, you come to the second bridge. It is just here you find the boat upon the Cyane.

The stream which is of some depth, especially for

Sicily, is a considerable body of water abounding in mullet; it runs swiftly. The bottom is clearly seen all the way and is covered with a thick growth of flags and weeds. The stream is not only swift and deep, but narrow, and the rower has often a hard, and always a difficult, task to manœuvre the heavy boat against it, between the ever thickening foliage on the banks.

Presently the first papyrus comes in sight and you soon find yourself passing between tall groves of this strange Egyptian plant, introduced here as it is said by the Saracens,[1] and here alone still growing freely, in all Europe.

The curious tufted green reed, which in ancient times was widely cultivated in the Nile Delta, but which is now extinct in Lower Egypt, grows here to a height of about twelve feet. It is of course famous because the Egyptians made a kind of paper or rather writing material from it. The curious and characteristic long-tufted head of the plant which is not very happily I think likened by Pliny to a thyrsus is useless except for making garlands for the shrines of the gods; it was the stem which was valuable. The Egyptians put this to all sorts of uses. They made boats from it and sails and cords and of course above all writing material. Herodotus says that the lower part was eaten and gives instructions for cooking it. I have tried it, but it proved tough and tasteless. He also says that it was used for making the sandals of priests. Herodotus is generally supposed to have been the first to record the papyrus or as he calls it the *βύβλος*. But I am not at all sure that Homer does not allude to it[2] when he says that Odysseus fastened the doors, when he slew the suitors, with *ὅπλον βύβλινον*. And when we read that Moses as a baby was hidden in "an ark of bulrushes" we must I suppose understand an ark of papyrus.

As for the Greeks just as they got the alphabet from

[1] As to the cultivation of the Papyrus in Europe, Strabo asserts that it grew on Lake Trasimeno. It certainly was cultivated in Sicily, where it was introduced by the Saracens, and throve at Palermo. But in the thirteenth century it began to disappear. As for these groves on the Cyane we do not hear of them before the end of the seventeenth century.

[2] *Odyssey* XXI, 390.

the Phœnicians, so they got their first paper, the papyrus from the Egyptians; and Herodotus tells us they called the papyrus sheets skins, because formerly, for lack of papyrus, they used the skins of sheep and goats. The preparation seems to have been very simple. The stems were first pared and the pith cut lengthwise into thin slices which were laid side by side on a flat board. Other slices were laid across them at right angles, their surfaces being cemented together with a sort of glue. They were then subjected to great pressure and thoroughly dried, when the manufacture was complete.

It is through the ever thickening groves of this famous and picturesque plant that you come at last to the source or fountain of Cyane. This is a large pool of marvellously clear water thirty feet deep—the spring of the Cyane stream. It is a spot of rare beauty and peace, but surrounded on all sides by an impassable and malarious marsh. The sanctuary or shrine of the Nymph to whom it was sacred must have stood on the height to the west, where in fact some ruins remain.

But who was this Nymph, who had so lovely a dwelling, where the yellow iris grows amid green water-meadows bright with wild flowers, and Etna far away reigns over all?

According to Ovid she was the most famous of the native Sicilian nymphs, a playmate of Persephone. When Hades carried off that maid of Enna it was here, where the Nymph had her abode, that he plunged down to his dark kingdom. But Cyane stood forth in the midst of her pool as far as her waist and cried, "No farther shalt thou go! Thou canst not be the son-in-law of Demeter against her will. The maid should have been wooed not ravished. Indeed if it be proper for me to compare small things with great, I also have been wooed by Anapus, and I wedded him yielding to prayer not to fear." So she spoke and stretching her arms on either side barred the way. But no longer could the son of Saturn hold his wrath. Urging on his terrible steeds he whirled his royal sceptre and smote the pool to the bottom. The smitten earth opened up a road to Tartarus and received the plunging chariot in her cavernous depths.

But Cyane grieving for the rape of the goddess and for her fountain's rights, thus set at naught, nursed an incurable wound in her silent heart, and dissolved away in tears. And into those very waters was she melted whose great divinity she had been but now. You might see her limbs softening, her bones becoming flexible, her nails losing their hardness. Till finally in place of living blood clear water flowed through her weakened veins and nothing was left that you could touch: all had vanished into the cool water of a stream.

It was the hero Herakles who, passing this way, instituted an annual festival upon the spot in honour of Cyane at which a bull was sunk into the fountain as a sacrifice.

The story of Persephone being carried off by Hades is not mentioned by Homer, it is first spoken of by Hesiod. Zeus it is said advised Hades, who was in love with the beautiful child, to carry her off, as her mother Demeter was not likely to allow her daughter to go down to Dis. So the god carried her off while she was gathering flowers in the field of Enna, in a soft meadow there, roses and crocuses and beautiful violets, irises also and the many headed narcissus which Earth made to grow to be a snare for the blooming girl: where to-day I am told no flowers grow any more.

Ovid says that she was playing in a wood, gathering violets and white lilies, and while with girlish eagerness she was filling her basket and her bosom, almost in one act did Hades see and love and carry her away. And such was the innocence of her girlish years that even while she was being carried off it was the loss of her flowers which fell from her loosened tunic that even at such a time aroused her grief.

Long is the story of Ovid and lovely his verse, but how much lovelier Milton's:

> Not that faire field
> Of *Enna*, where *Proserpin* gathring flours
> Her self a fairer Floure by gloomie *Dis*
> Was gatherd, which cost *Ceres* all that pain
> To seek her through the world. . . .

In like manner Zeus stole away Europa with a yellow crocus.

Ah, reprehensible Gods! Cyane did well to reproach you. In our well policed civilization you would certainly meet with your deserts. Let me see. I suppose the *Giornale di Silicia* would report it something in this fashion

Movimentato arresto di un bruto a Siracusa

BAMBINA VIOLENTATA DA UN BRUTO

NOSTRO SERVIZIO TELEGRAFICO

SIRACUSA, 5 notte. — Un vecchio satiro certo Pluto fu Saturno, di Dite, banchiere, nonostante i suoi molti anni ha ancora idee bellicose in fatto di . . . donne.

Il male si'è che il vecchio superando ogni scrupulo morale tenta adoperare i resti della sua vigoria compiendo atti osceni ed insensati in danno di innocenti creature.

Oggi infatti il malvagio satiro adocchiava la bambina Proserpina di Giove di anni 12 abitante in Enna in via del Tempio la quale tornava da scuola insieme ad una compagna.

Il Pluto in automobile fermava precisamente sotto il ponticello ferroviario tentava di afferrare la fanciulla a scopo evidente di sfogare su di essa le sue brutale voglie. Al grido di Proserpina, accorreva la bambina Cyane la sua compagna che assisteva alla trista scena. . . .

It is good to linger here in the long afternoon before returning, floating down upon the stream; a far more delightful thing than rowing up.

Then on the way home one may visit the Olympieum —that Temple of Olympian Zeus which stood on the height, on the banks of the Anapus where still two columns remain. This sanctuary was very famous and a small town soon grew up about it very much I suppose as the village of

S. Maria degli Angeli has grown up round the Porziuncula, which is about as far outside Assisi as this Temple was from Syracuse. This small town was called Polichne or the Little City. As it commanded a bridge over the Anapus it was always of military importance and has played its part in every siege of Syracuse. To-day it is only worth a visit for the sake of remembrance : there is really nothing to see.

II

THE AQUEDUCT

One of the great miseries of modern life everywhere is the ever-increasing difficulty of finding roads to walk in, where you will not be at the mercy of the motor-car. It used to be my greatest pleasure to go afoot all along the roads of Italy, but for many years now that has been impossible. The roads of every country to-day seem to belong to the wayfarer no longer : they have become the absolute property of the motorist. There is no longer any pleasure in them for the pedestrian : on the contrary there is acute discomfort from dust and mud, and a continual uneasiness, which does not accord at all with the sentiment of him who goes afoot, and this amounts at times to genuine danger. To walk in the ditch or the gutter does not accord with the dignity of any man. There are of course many motor-cars upon the Syracusan roads, and the state of those roads, which are always inches deep in dust or else morasses of mud, full of huge potholes and often as stony as the bed of a torrent, makes any idea of walking, as far as they are concerned, impossible.

Happily there are many by-ways hereabout and there is always the wide plateau of Epipolæ where only the pedestrian and the mule can hope to go at all. But for the most part the going upon Epipolæ is very rough, littered as it is with stones, and the by-ways, as I say, are often little better than torrent beds.

But in such a country, so full of beauty and delight, one refuses to be for ever hurled about in a motor-car, or jolted

to death *in vettura*. Walks there must be and of course walks there are.

My favourite—that which became my favourite—leads along the Aqueduct past the Belvedere to the foot of the Monti Climiti and beyond, if I liked, to Corvo near Sortino.

Of course you can follow the Aqueduct if you like all the way from the Greek Theatre to Euryalus: but that was not my favourite walk. For the most part it means simply tramping along the New Road all the way to the Fortress: a very dull business when you have done it more than once.

My walk was quite other than this. First of all I would drive out to Euryalus, leaving the *vettura* where the new road joins the old, on the last turn under the fortress. I would then as often as not send on the *vettura* with the lunch to the foot of the Monti Climiti where the by-road meets the road from Sortino. Then I afoot followed the Aqueduct all the way through the gardens and orchards and flowers till in an orange grove under that mountain headland I found the cab and the lunch and there lounged away the afternoon with Theocritus. A glance at the map will show the way I went.

The great advantage of this walk did not lie alone in its entrancing beauty, but in this also, that there was a smooth path free from stones the whole way and the sound of running water accompanied you.

The Aqueduct, now called *Acquedotto Galerio*, but constructed certainly in antiquity and probably by Dionysius, can be followed all the way from the Greek Theatre where its waters turn a mill underground as far as the Monti Climiti and thence to Bottiglieria near Pantàlica, some twenty-two *chilometri* from Syracuse. Its square-cut shafts which the few peasants find useful for dipping up their water, mark its course clearly, and beyond Euryalus where they are closer together, mark out your path for you, though in fact the way is clear enough.

This then was my favourite walk—to follow the Aqueduct beyond Euryalus as far as the whim of the moment tempted me. All the way is an incredible paradise of every kind of wildflower, of the almond in blossom or in the scarcely

less lovely tender green of its leaf, of apricot and plum tree in full flower, of dark carobs, orange groves golden with fruit, amid which the white blossoms shine like snowflakes and olives as old as history. There is only one village upon the way—the village of the Belvedere with its *Posto Semaforico* on the lofty isolated hill behind it. Beyond there is nothing but flowers and almond groves and olive gardens and orchards of oranges and lemons.

The path follows the Aqueduct meandering gently along the slope under the rocky plateau which stands up to the north and hides the sea. Often you are tempted to scramble over those pallid boulders and to win the crest. If you do, as likely as not you will come upon a large beehive built into the mouth of a cave with dozens of partitions for the honeycombs: for these are the Hyblæan hills and the Hyblæan honey was only less sweet than the Attic honey of Hymettus. And if you do reach the broad back of the ridge you will see once more all that storied coast, the violet sea, Mellili on its hill top, the site of Megara, the Xiphonian Promontory and snow-capped Etna over all.

So you arrive; and in the shade of that orange grove or beneath the olives beside the Aqueduct, under the Monti Climiti, eat what you have brought and drink the Syracusan wine mixed with a little water, and in the shade turn again to Theocritus who sings of this place also where

> " the beautiful waters pour down Thymbris vale "

and Thymbris vale is at your feet.

III

THE PROMONTORY OF TROGILUS

A very different walk may be taken round the great headland upon which Achradina lies, where steep limestone cliffs thrust back the sea between the Lesser Harbour and the Tonnara of S. Panagia. This headland of old was known as the Promontory of Trogilus, to-day its most

seaward cape is known as Capo di S. Panagia : that is to say of the all hallowed, the Blessed Virgin.

To begin this walk I used to climb over the wall just outside the upper or Capuchin gate of Villa Politi and follow the track. It soon loses itself among the wilderness of stones upon the headland, but you have only to follow the coast or if that seems too long the railway line.

The beauty of this walk is all a sea beauty. There is nothing else to recommend it. But that sea has borne the triremes of the Athenians, the fleets of Carthage and of Rome. Over it Alcibiades sailed for Thurii intent upon treason to Athens. From it Æschylus first saw Etna, and Plato the quays of Syracuse. Theocritus must have idled away many an hour in such a place as this where

> On the sward at the cliff top
> Lie strewn the white flocks,

and far below shines and murmurs the Sicilian sea.

When you are tired of such pleasures of the imagination there remains the *Tonnara* of S. Panagia—the tunny fishery which is interesting to visit : for such fisheries have been carried on from the time of the Phœnicians who preserved the flesh in salt, to the present day, when oil is preferred. This huge fish which runs to many hundred pounds in weight is usually caught by being driven into net enclosures and then harpooned : not a pleasant spectacle.

Beyond the *tonnara* you can find the road inland back to Syracuse or continue along the coast for another mile and then scramble up the side of the plateau among the bracken and wild flowers to the look-out on the Catania road where it climbs Tyche.

IV

TO ACRÆ (PALAZZOLO)

A much more tiring excursion than either of those pleasant walks may be made in a short day by motor-

car to Acræ, or Palazzolo as it is called to-day, the great inland outpost and fortress of Syracuse towards the mountains, established from the first and still full of Greek ruins and antiquities. It lies about twenty-seven miles to the west of Syracuse in a pass of the Hyblæan Mountains at a height of 2,280 feet.

It can be reached either by way of Floridia and Solarino or by way of Canicattini : the latter is perhaps the lovelier and the better road, though the views from Solarino and beyond are perhaps more splendid.

Acræ itself, as a glance at the map will show us, is the key to the Hyblæans. It is impossible to pass from the coast of south-eastern Sicily into the interior without passing Acræ. That is why it was so early established by Syracuse, some seventy years after the foundation of that city, in 664 B.C. according to Thucydides, and no doubt it played its part in keeping the pass against the Sikeli for many years ; but its supreme justification came at the end of the Athenian Expedition when it prevented the retreat of Nikias upon his Sikelian allies, turned him back, and was the cause of the complete disaster to the Athenian forces which followed. It is, then, a notable place that has played its part in one of the most famous affairs in the history of Europe, and is well worth visiting, not only on that account, but for the sake of the buildings and other antiquities it still preserves.

As you climb up into it to-day really on the top of the pass which it absolutely dominates you begin to understand its strength. That it was originally walled who can doubt since it was established if not within, then on the edge of, hostile territory, but no traces of walls remain.

You climb up to the acropolis above the modern town, on foot, to find the only approach, this from the east, everywhere protected by Latomie. Here upon the topmost height is the exquisite little Greek Theatre which might have held six or seven thousand persons. It is wonderfully preserved, and has indeed still traces of its altar and is altogether one of the most charming relics of Greek Sicily. There are twelve semicircles of seats divided into seven *cunei* by eight flights of steps.

Close by is the tiny Odeon or what is said to be the Odeon. It was used it is thought for music, and if so it must have been covered. Others have thought it to have been a bath; but Professor Orsi of Syracuse seems to favour the first conjecture, and there are certainly many difficulties to be faced if the latter be adopted.

Upon the other side of the Theatre are the Latomie, the quarries out of which Acræ was built and which then became her defence. One of the walls is covered with carvings in the nature of *ex votis*. These Latomie have been used by the Christians of the fourth to the sixth century as a place of entombment. There are here too a series of catacombs which are similar to those in Syracuse. On the hill of the Theatre called by the people to-day Acremonte, are some very singular monuments consisting of figures as large as life hewn in relief in shallow niches in the surface of the rock. The principal figures seem to be those of Demeter and Persephone.

Nor is this all. Upon what is thought to be the Via Sacra are the so called *Templi Ferali*; two large recesses covered with carvings and inscriptions.

There are also in the neighbourhood both a Sikelian and a Greek necropolis, and remains of aqueducts and cisterns. Nor is this all, for in Palazzolo a very interesting Museum is to be seen, the Museo Judica especially rich in Corinthian vases of the seventh, sixth and fifth centuries B.C.

V

PANTÀLICA

Syracuse is to-day the best starting point from which to reach what is perhaps the most astonishing spectacle in all Sicily: I mean the enormous cañon in the valley of the Anapus which is a vast Sikelian necropolis, a City of the Dead containing more than five thousand tombs, more impressive even than the similar necropolis in the Val d'Ispica.

Perhaps the easiest and certainly the cheapest way to reach Pantàlica is by train not from the main station of Syracuse but from the small station called Siracusa Nuova in Borgo S. Antonio. You go to the halt of Necròpoli Pantàlica and inform the guard at Syracuse you wish to alight there. But as there are only two trains in the day, this means getting up in time to leave Siracusa Nuova at 5.55 a.m. You can return from Pantàlica, most conveniently however, at 4.30 p.m.

The other way is to go to Sortino Fusco or Sortino itself by motor-car, a distance of, say, twenty miles. It is a somewhat tiring walk from Sortino of an hour and a half to Pantàlica and is much more conveniently done on mules.

Whichever way you approach Pantàlica, whether over the hills from Sortino or from the valley of the Anapus, it is a most impressive sight. If you come as I did from the valley, you enter this vast necropolis by a narrow gorge with sheer precipitous sides many hundreds of feet high. As you push on and on, up this gloomy cañon, as the gorge winds it opens, but remains of the same great height. And there cut in the sheer sides of the limestone cliffs are thousand upon thousand of dark windows—Sikelian tombs, a whole vast city of the dead. It is hard to see how the dead could have been conveyed by the living to such a place, how the bodies were ever lowered, and, not without ceremony, thrust into these holes for martins in the sheer face of the cliff. It is truly an appalling spectacle this vast necropolis of the dead who lived before history begins. It is as though for a moment Sicily, which is all a graveyard, had bared her bosom and revealed the infinite populations of the dead, that are what we soon shall be. And if, as I did, you come upon this place by chance, without knowing what you shall see, and at evening, at the beginning of twilight, when those innumerable dark windows seem each to have its occupant, its watcher, you will find it, as I did, one of the most eerie places in the world.

VI

THE CAVA DI SPAMPANATO

It had always been my wish, ever since I first read Thucydides' marvellous account of the Athenian Expedition at school, to follow Nikias in his disastrous retreat to see the Akraion Lepas, the Acræan Rock, which halted him and his desperate army, as he saw it, and to understand in that very place the whole appalling catastrophe. So when I read in Bædeker that "near Floridia is the Cava di Spampanato (or Culatrello) a highly romantic gorge through which the Athenians forced their way on their retreat to the Acræan Rock in 413 B.C.," I made up my mind to march up or down the whole of this gorge and to see what they had seen.

It was no easy undertaking, for no one in Syracuse that I could find had ever heard of the place at least by name. There was nothing for it but to go to Floridia.

So I set out very early one morning by motor-car for Floridia. Arrived there I sought a priest and told him my difficulty. I could not have done better. The priests in my experience—the priests and the friars and monks —are the salt of the Mediterranean. Don Sardo knew at once what I wanted and directed me how to find it. At the same time he warned me that what I proposed to do I should find a very tiring business. In this too he was right, and I should like here to thank him. At the same time I think it was worth all the weariness I suffered and the roughness of the way. I saw the Acræan Rock. I understood as even Thucydides could not show me, what the Athenian army must have suffered and I had the honour to suffer with them perhaps a thousandth part of what they underwent.

But what is it Thucydides says?

He tells us that after their utter defeat in the Great Harbour the Athenians were so affected by the magnitude of their present ills that they did not even give a thought to wrecks or dead, or ask leave to take them up, but were planning an immediate retreat during the night. The

Syracusans foreseeing this and realizing that it would be a serious matter if so large an army retreating overland should settle somewhere in Sicily and be disposed to renew the war upon Syracuse, sent out forces to build barricades across the roads and frustrate the enemy by guarding the narrow passes. No doubt they reinforced the fortress of Acræ which was almost as old as Syracuse itself. Then they subtly assured the Athenians that this had been done so as to delay their departure till daylight by which time all would be made secure.

So the Athenians, seeing no trickery, tarried, not for one day but till the third day, when with the utmost reluctance and in agony of spirit they abandoned their dead as well as their sick and their wounded, who begged to be taken along with them, clinging to their tent-mates and following as long as they were able, failing, falling behind with faint appeals to the gods and lamentations.

Indeed, the Athenians looked like nothing less than a city in secret flight after a siege, and that no small city, for in the entire throng no fewer than four myriads were on the march together. And as they went Nikias passed along the ranks and endeavoured to encourage them, shouting as he came to each contingent in order to make his voice heard as far as possible.

The retreat was begun in hollow square, the division of Nikias leading the way and that of Demosthenes following. They set out on the Floridia road crossing the Anapus some miles above the Temple of Zeus. The crossing of the river was accomplished though disputed, and on that first day they went forward forty stadia, that is about five miles, and bivouacked at a hill, close I suppose to Jericuno. On the next day they began the march early and after proceeding about twenty stadia, that is two and a half miles, they came down into a level place and encamped ; for they wished to get something to eat from the houses which stood there, for the place was inhabited, and no water lay ahead of them. Thus I suppose they encamped in the wide vale below Floridia, then a village.

On the next day, the third of the retreat, they went

forward—they entered the lower part of the Cava that is —and the Syracusans and their allies attacked them and at length forced them to return to their encampment below Floridia. They were now without provisions, for it was impossible to leave the main body to forage.

Early next morning they set out again and forced their way through to the hill called the Acræan rock where a wall had been built across the pass in a narrow place, and there the Syracusans were drawn up behind the wall in force. In vain they tried to storm the wall and as the Syracusans attempted to build another wall behind them they retreated to the more open part of the cava and bivouacked.

On the next day, the fifth of the retreat, they advanced again, always with difficulty and under attack, and rested in the bottom ; and during the night it was determined to abandon the attempt to force a way through the Pass.

Then Nikias and Demosthenes caused as many camp fires as possible to be kindled, and when this was done they withdrew the army by night and in great confusion and fear. At dawn they reached the sea, but no longer as one body, for the army of Nikias was far in advance of the more confused body under Demosthenes. Then began that flight along the Helorine road which ended in the surrender and destruction of both armies upon the streams we call Cassibile and Asinaro.

Now to see what is said to be the very place where this dreadful business was enacted it is necessary to set out from Floridia on foot and after crossing the vale to the south to make one's way up the dry torrent bed westward, a wilderness of stones and boulders which is the Cava di Spampanato. It is well to send the car on to meet you at Mellili on the Palazzolo road for the way up the Cava is infinitely tiring. Tiring is not the proper word for such a scramble. The whole valley is soon filled by the torrent bed which is a mass of dry round stones with vast boulders lying here and there. These round white limestones glisten and shine in the sun with a really blinding effect and the heat is suffocating. To stumble mile after mile up this ever narrowing valley dry as a bone for eleven months of

the year, is to suffer real misery and fatigue. But one does it in a small company of two or three. The imagination boggles at what it must have been to an army of many thousands of men. Enclosed on every side by great cliffs that army was everywhere at the mercy of its assailants above. No order of march can have been properly kept, for one perforce stumbles along, one's boots in ribbons, as best one can. How Nikias ever persisted in such a place for three days is beyond one's comprehension.

In fact it must seem to every one who has ever attempted the Cava that it is most unlikely he did so. No army could possibly have pushed its way up the Spampanato without going to pieces and being trapped and utterly destroyed there. Some road possibly on the site of the present highway to Palazzolo, perhaps upon the southern hills, must have existed and been used by the Athenians. Or if indeed they used this passage then Nikias was foredoomed—foredoomed by an inherent dullness and stupidity, which, if it were so, makes clearer his whole conduct of the campaign, and above all his superstitious terror, so amazing in an Athenian, of the eclipse and the thunderstorm.

CHAPTER VIII

ON THE WAY TO GIRGENTI: CALTAGIRONE AND GELA

THE thought of the journey by train from Syracuse to Girgenti frightened me. Ten hours in a Sicilian train was more than I cared to put up with, if it could be avoided, and therefore I welcomed the opportunity which suddenly offered of going all the way by road *en automobile*. It proved to be one of the most enjoyable rides I have ever had, through marvellously beautiful and most varied scenes, and I strongly advise any fellow-traveller who may happen upon this book to do as I did. But the road is exceedingly mountainous and the car should be a good one.

I had wished to go by Noto, Ragusa and Vittoria but that was impossible. The road beyond Vittoria, we were told, had for long been impassable. It was necessary therefore to take the way through Palazzolo and Caltagirone coming down to the African Sea at Terranova, the ancient Gela, where Æschylus died so strangely, and so on by the coast through Licata to Girgenti.

And since this road would show us something of the interior of Sicily we were the more reconciled to it. I had therefore to give up all hope of seeing what remained of Helorus to the south of Noto, of Motica and of Camarina to the south of Vittoria. I especially wished, however, to traverse the Helorine road as far as Noto in the wake of the Athenian retreat, and so it was along that road we set out before nine o'clock one spring morning, intending to leave it at Noto and make our way northward to Palazzolo. As it happened we got no farther than Cassibile, where we stuck in the mud. The car was a heavy

Fiat saloon equal to anything and we got free of the morass at last; but fearing worse misfortunes on a road only too full of them, we gave it up and made off at once for the hills and came to Palazzolo at last through Canicattini.

Palazzolo, the Greek Acræ, is as I have said the key to the Hyblæan Mountains, it holds the high pass across them on this side, as Caltagirone does on the other. These mountains which rise to a height of well over 3,000 feet are the watershed between the Ionian and the African sea.

We began to climb into their high, and, for the most part, bare solitudes after leaving Palazzolo. At Buscemi, which is 2,200 feet above the sea, we looked down upon the high valley of the Anapus on one side, while on the other we could follow its long and winding course past Erbesso and Pantàlica to Sortino where it turned eastward to Syracuse and the sea. The height just outside Buscemi, as you come up into it, is Monte S. Niccolò, where some curiously carved and decorated artificial caves may be seen dating from the Roman time with Byzantine inscriptions. And in the Cava di S. Pietro, a wild gorge to the north of the village, there is a curious Byzantine sanctuary excavated in the rock also with inscriptions.

Still climbing all the time we swept on across the Piana di Bûccheri without a tree or even a bush to break the bare sides of these solitary heights. Suddenly we came round a peak and there lay the brown weathered roofs of Bùccheri below us, and towering up, far far away, filling the whole horizon, snow-crowned Etna shining in the sun; a sight to catch the breath with its beauty.

Bùccheri is a considerable mountain village of more than 4,000 inhabitants some 2,500 feet above the sea, possibly the highest village in these mountains. Save the marvellous view of which I have spoken, it had nothing to offer us. We continued along the steep and narrow back of the Hyblæans, descending now to their centre at Vizzini, view after view of the greatest beauty and strength opening before us.

Vizzini, which is seven hundred feet lower than Bùccheri and a much larger place with over 18,000 inhabitants, is quite without interest for travellers. We continued, still

gradually descending, winding round a vast ravine, and now among prickly pears and vines and fruit trees, and then across a high and fertile plain, to Grammichele, some 1,600 feet above the sea, a curiously built town radiating from a central piazza, about the same size as Vizzini. Caltagirone was now in sight and we soon swept up to this city that stands so magnificently at the gateway of the mountains.

Caltagirone stands up on its triune hill really astride the pass, its waters flowing on one side into the Piana di Catania and the Ionian, on the other into the Campi Geloi and the African Sea. It stands some 1,800 feet up and has some 30,000 inhabitants. It is in fact a considerable and a civilized place with a quite passable inn where one may be sure of food and good Sicilian cooking.

I do not wish to be misunderstood. You will not find a Tuscan inn at Caltagirone, but they have food and do not insist on your supplying your own and they can cook an omelette. So we ordered a simple meal and waited.

The food is everywhere—in Palermo and in Syracuse quite as much as in Caltagirone—one of the weaknesses of Sicily. At the hotels it is monotonous and unappetizing, at the *ristoranti* and *trattorie* poor in quality and meagre in choice. The maccheroni are of course excellent, but most foreigners cannot live on maccheroni alone. The meats whatever they are called, and they are generally called *agnellino*, are invariably some sort of goat, and you are lucky if that goat is kid. Sicilians have told me that kid is delicious. It may be so: then what I have always had must have been goat, and goat is frankly beastly. It would be a good thing to exterminate all the goats in Sicily, in the Mediterranean, and, if you like, in the world.

As for green vegetables, every hotel-keeper in Sicily tells you—ah, but signore, they have to come all the way from Venice or may be he says from Lombardy. Why? Here is the most fruitful corner of the earth, the home of Ceres, the garden of the Mediterranean and it cannot produce even a decent cabbage to say nothing of beans and peas and other delights! And it is the same with

SICILIAN STREET

the butter. The native article does not seem to exist. What you get is that disgusting commodity made from the milk of the goat. If you happen to insist upon and obtain real butter it is almost invariably rancid because it has come "all the way from Lombardy."

The best food Sicily produces is her cheeses. These have always been famous, and just as Attica was celebrated for its honey of Hymettus so was Sicily for her incomparable cheese. Fresh cheese τροφαλίς was "the glory of fair Sicily." So that Aristophanes in the *Peace* uses it as emblematic of the island. And Philemon, Athenæus tells us, in his play *The Sicilian*, says:

> I once did think that Sicily could make
> This one especial thing, good-flavoured cheese;
> But now I've heard this good of it besides,
> That not only is the cheese of Sicily good,
> But all its pigeons too. . . .

Euripides too in *The Cyclops* speaks of a cheese he calls ὀπίας τυρὸς. This seems to have been a harsh-tasting cheese curdled by the juice (ὀπὸς) of the fig-tree. This, with what I am sure was *agnellino*, was all the Cyclops could offer Odysseus. Much the same to-day. But the cheeses of Sicily are still almost invariably excellent and there are many varieties; each district, if not each village, having its own.

As for the wines, in spite of the ancient fame of the Mamertine and the Syracusan,[1] Sicilian wines to-day—I do not now speak of Marsala—are inferior in every way to those of the Continent. There is nothing in the whole island to equal the wines of Chianti, of the Roman Castelli, of Montepulciano and of Orvieto or those of Vesuvius, to name only the better known varieties.

The Sicilian wines may be roughly classified into three kinds. The bottled species (Corvo, Casteldoccia, etc., made presumably for export and high-class hotel consumption by big landed proprietors) which are sometimes better than one thinks—judging by the preposterous labels—

[1] But what were the Iotaline and the Pollian wines? They were Sicilian. The Pollian was a sweet wine apparently the same as the Biblian which was a Thracian wine, or perhaps Phœnician.

they are going to be. Then all the Marsala breed called "bianco" which infests Sicily and which whether strong or weak in quality, whether cheap or dear, is the filthiest drink imaginable and not to be touched. And then the common "rosso" which is obtainable everywhere if one insists upon getting it, in a thousand varieties, some of which are excellent. Each place and each proprietor seem to have their own. It is only served from the barrel, and the peculiarity of Sicily is that you do not order it by the litre or any fixed measure, but by the size of the glass which you want filled with it—a number of empty glasses of different capacities being always ready for the customers of those haunts where coachman and gentleman go to find the only drinkable wine which can be found in Sicily. That is my experience at least. Not worth much!

Now as to Marsala. The only good thing you can say of Marsala is that it goes well with gorgonzola. At best it is a poor substitute for Sherry or Madeira, without any real character of its own. If it be dry it is fearfully acid, if it be sweet it is too luscious for the northern palate. It is a fortified wine, and was I think invented to supply the English demand for sherry when Nelson and the British Fleet were in these waters.

Perhaps I may say here that there seems to be no truth whatever in the supposition that the finest Greek wines and especially the products of Greek Sicily and the Islands were of the sweet and luscious sort. The very opposite is the truth, as is proven by the epithets most often applied to them, such as *αὐστηρός*, *σκληρός*, *λεπτός*, that is rough, dry, thin, fine, delicate; while *γλυκύς* and *γλυκάζων* are rarely used. Besides *οἶνος ἡδύς* generally translated "sweet wine" means actually the reverse, an absence of acidity, as we should say a sound wine.

No doubt the first mention of wine in the *Odyssey*, the most famous wine in the world which Odysseus was given by Maron the priest of Apollo upon the skirts of Thracian Ismarus, was a sweet wine. It was a red wine too—*ἐρυθρόν*—and was *μελιηδέα*—honey sweet; it was so precious that it was unknown save to the priest himself, his wife and one house-dame; so strong that a single

cup was mixed with twenty of water; so fragrant that even when thus diluted it diffused a marvellous sweet perfume.

But what am I saying! This was not the most famous of wines. The most famous wine in the world of course was that which Telemachus drank after supper in Sparta, into which Helen, daughter of Zeus, cast a drug to quiet all pain and strife and bring forgetfulness of every ill. Whoso should drink this down when it was mingled in the bowl, would not in the course of that day let a tear fall, no not though his mother and father should lie there dead nor though before his face men should slay with the sword his brother, or dear son, and his own eyes behold it.

The Greeks were wiser than ourselves in this also. They recognized four colours in wines: black (*μέλας*), red (*ἐρυθρός*), amber (*κιρρός*), and white or palest gold (*λευκός*). And they knew that old wine is not only more pleasant but also better for the health than new, for it aids digestion more and as Athenæus points out is thinner and itself more digestible. The ancients, like the modern French and Italians, seldom drank unmixed wine, wine that is unmixed with water. Indeed Herodotus in his sixth book says that Cleomenes, King of Sparta, having lived among the barbarous Scythians got the habit of drinking unmixed wine and thereby became perfectly mad. . . .

Homer also speaks of a wine he calls *αἴθοψ*, which means sparkling; but whether sparkling in colour or in the sense of effervescence I do not know: the former I imagine—from its resemblance to the colour of fire which Sicilian *rosso* has, a kind of glowing colour.

But I was getting devilish hungry! Our host of the Albergo Trinacria seemed to be a singularly long time preparing our eggs and trimming that Sicilian goat which was to be the *piéce de résistance*. Oh for a place at one of those old Syracusan feasts against which Plato warns his correspondent! Ah, those Syracusan tables, that old Sicilian variety of dishes! . . .

Caltagirone is the Faenza of Sicily they say. At any rate it is famous for its majolica. There seems to have

been a Sikelian town here in antiquity and even in prehistoric times, so at least the excavations at Montagna, a mile or two to the north-west of the town, suggest, and perhaps a Greek outpost or at any rate what seems more likely, Greek influence as long ago as the sixth century B.C. And yet why more likely? Caltagirone stands in relation to the Greek city of Gela on the south coast exactly as Acræ stands to Syracuse. There may well have been a Greek fortress here at this end of the pass as there was at Acræ at the other. Only its name escapes us, for Caltagirone is Saracen *Kalatgerun*, they say, the fortress cave, but nothing seems to be known of the Saracen or Byzantine town. But as excavation has proved both in antiquity and in Saracen times also, Caltagirone was a seat of the pottery craft and thus endured right through the ages and continues to-day. The modern industry owes everything to Gesualdo di Bartolo, and in Casa Bartolo in Via Stovigliai there is a fine collection of Caltagirone ware.

Not much is to be seen in the town which was largely destroyed in the earthquake of 1693. The great flight of steps up out of the Piazza leads to the old ruined Castle. The town has a few houses of the seventeenth century, worth seeing perhaps, such as the Casino dei Nobili and the church of S. Giacomo, a rebuilding of an older church after the earthquake of 1693, in which in the transept on the gospel side is a fine doorway by one of the Gagini, the Sicilian sculptors, dated 1585. The museum in the Via degli Studi is worth a visit for its prehistoric pottery and local majolica.

But we could not spend long in Caltagirone, if we were to reach Girgenti that night, for we were not yet half-way there, and it was already afternoon.

So we set out, and almost at once began to descend rapidly southward towards the coast, down the valley of the Maraglio, the ancient Gela; and as the valley opened wide we came into those Campi Geloi of which both Diodorus and Virgil speak, and which are still as in antiquity among the most fertile corn-growing districts in Sicily. Indeed they gave Gela her epithet of πυρόφορος, the wheat-

bearing. Soon Gela itself rose up before us on its long hill that hid the sea.

Terranova, Gela that was, is a large town of 23,000 inhabitants. It was founded in 690 B.C., forty-four years after Syracuse, by a joint colony of Cretans and Rhodians, and was one of the most important Greek cities in Sicily. Thucydides says the place got its name from the river Gela, but the place where the acropolis then was, which was the first to be fortified, was called Lindii, evidently after Lindus in Rhodes. The institutions given to it were Dorian and just one hundred and eight years after its foundation the Geloans founded Acragas (Girgenti) naming it too after the river upon which it stood. The new colony is a proof in itself of the flourishing condition of Gela. In the beginning of the fifth century B.C. Hippocrates was Tyrant of Gela and raised it to the pinnacle of its power, reducing Leontinoi, Callipolis and far Naxos to servitude and even taking Zankle (Messina). Gelon succeeded him and made himself master of Syracuse in 485 B.C. This was the beginning of the decline of Gela, for Gelon, preferring Syracuse, not only established himself there, but compelled half the inhabitants of Gela to migrate there also. After some years of oppression the city recovered, and after 466 B.C. was able to found a new colony at Camarina, which Gelon had desolated. The city now seems to have prospered until it was laid waste by the Carthaginians in 405 B.C.

That period of prosperity after 466 B.C. is particularly remarkable in Gela for the fact that it was then she received the greatest of her guests, the poet Æschylus, who in 457 B.C. was exiled from Athens. The great Athenian, it seems, had in his last play the *Eumenides* shown himself to be a supporter of the old order against the democratic policy of Pericles. He was an old man and opposed to the younger generation among whom he was a stranger. In disgust perhaps, certainly in fear, he left Athens and came once more to Sicily. The Athenian rabble irresponsible and vicious even went so far we are told as to accuse the great tragedian of impiety, and would have condemned him, as they were later, when the fruits of democracy

proved bitter, to condemn Socrates. The old man left Athens and sought the hospitality of Gela, where a year later in 456 B.C. he died, most mysteriously as it happened. For it is said that an eagle mistaking the poet's bald head for a stone let fall upon it a tortoise to break the shell, and so fulfilled an oracle according to which Æschylus was fated to die by a blow from heaven. Whether this really happened—there are other instances of similar things—or whether it is an allegory we shall never know.

At any rate his last days were spent in peace and in honour. The people of Gela showed their regard for his genius and his character by public solemnities in his honour and by erecting a noble monument to him and inscribing it with an epitaph which he himself had written. In it Gela is mentioned as the place of his burial, and the field of Marathon as the place of his most glorious achievements: no mention at all is made therein of his poetry.

The grove of Marathon and the long-haired Medes
Who felt his valour well may speak of it . . .

It is needless to say that nothing of this monument remains in Gela to-day. But there are ruins of ancient Gela. On a hill to the east of the modern town are parts of the stylobate, and a prostrate column, of a Doric Temple of the fifth century B.C. Close by in 1906 was excavated the stylobate of an older temple very finely decorated in painted terra-cotta, and on the western side of the present town at the end of the Corso upon Capo Soprano were the great *necròpoli* of the Greek city the spoil of which is now in the Museum of Syracuse.

We left Gela with regret. Had there been a passable hostelry there we should have stayed for the night. The coast is fine and the country delicious. As it was we were compelled to push on in the golden sunset over the sea through Licata and Palma to Girgenti.

It was already moonlight when the majestic line of Temples came in sight and we turned up the hill behind them to the city.

CHAPTER IX

GIRGENTI

THERE can be few more wonderful sights left in the world than the spectacle which lies before one from the hills of Girgenti, and especially from the terraces and gardens of the Hotel des Temples. Behind you rise two lofty and precipitous heights, whence the land subsides, sloping gradually seaward in a series of waves. From one of these, the first and the highest, you look down over a sea of almond blossom to the long line of Temples which stand along the last, behind them the sea.

For its suggestion, as it were, of resurrection, the vision it seems to offer you of the remote and beautiful past, of a life wholly different, and, in your first material glimpse of it, thus magically spread before you, certainly lovelier than anything we have known, that view is unique, not only in Sicily but in the world. You seem suddenly to have found, still tangible and living upon earth, that old and beloved Greek world which till now has been but a dream rising from the pages of a book, the words of a poet, the description of an historian, the thoughts of a philosopher. There it stands, the golden sun upon it, waves of blossoming almond beating against it, and, shining through its colonnades, the violet sea. Here suddenly between two heart beats you realize you have come home.

Yes, on that first morning in the southern sunshine, that line of Temples, so perfect, that to the seeing eye, they still seem complete, really unbroken and unspoiled, one realizes what an unredeemed mistake everything has been since they were built : the barbarism of what destroyed them, the futility of the dreams which were not satisfied with them,

the baseness and the folly of the desertion: Carthage, Rome, the Middle Age, the modern world, what are they all but disaster piled on disaster beside the world which these expressed. There dwelt reason, temperance, equanimity; for a moment, if only for a moment, visibly present with one again, on first beholding, rebeholding rather—the now well remembered, unforgettable city of our youth—our childhood and our home.

There was a world, then, in which perfection existed; it was that world.

It is gone. We shall not see it again. Save on some fortunate day, in some privileged hour, upon a rare and halcyon morning, or, as here, beside these half abandoned ruins, we shall not even divine perhaps that it ever was ours. Like our childhood it lies behind us, it has vanished away; only, like that childhood, it has left behind it, at least to the acceptable soul, something that is half a memory, half an intuition, of its genius, its harmony, its spirit here made manifest, which shall not wholly die, shall not altogether vanish. And yet. . . .

Those Temples which in their so reasonable beauty, their harmony, enchantment and completeness fill the mind of the traveller who sees them for the first time with an almost overwhelming sense of nostalgia, stand as I have said on a long hill precipitous over the sea as it seems, though in fact some two or three miles from it. Above them landward and almost as far off tower up the isolated and almost unapproachable heights of the acropolis and of the Rupe Atenea, upon the first of which the modern city is built, a climbing mass of houses crowned by the Cathedral, mediæval still, like the city itself, in spite of modern restoration.

From the foot of these two towering heights the land slopes away in a restless series of low clay hills, cut by the deep winding gorges of the two small rivers of the place the Acragas and the Hypsas, and now a sea of almond blossom, to the long hill upon which the Temples stand, its steep escarpment falling precipitously to the wide sea plain between Punta Bianca and Porto Empedocle, the modern harbour of Girgenti.

The great natural strength of the place—for both the heights of the Acropolis and the Rupe Atenea were precipitous and only approachable the one upon the east and other upon the west, while the hill of the temples formed a natural fortification to the south—no doubt recommended it and, as may still be seen, was improved by surrounding walls some six miles about, large parts of which still remain, especially upon the southern front. If Pindar called it "the fairest of mortal cities," and it may well have been so, it was certainly one of the strongest, while the magnificence of its public and private buildings is attested by what we see and by the remark of Empedocles, who said of the Agrigentines that they lived so luxuriously you might think they expected to die tomorrow, but they built as though they would live for ever.

II

We learn from Thucydides that Acragas was founded by a colony from Gela about one hundred and eight years after the establishment of that city, that is to say about 581 B.C. And they named the city after the River Acragas, making Aristonous and Pystilus founders, and giving it the institutions of the Geloans which were Dorian. It seems almost immediately to have fallen into the hands of a tyrant, the mysterious Phalaris, who made it one of the most powerful cities in Sicily and extended his rule over a considerable part of the island. The cruelty of his administration, however, became proverbial. A certain Perillus constructed for him a brazen bull, in which he is said to have burnt his victims alive, Perillus himself being the subject of his first experiment. This fact or fable seems to point to a strong Phœnician influence and to a cult of Moloch of which we have perhaps other traces in Girgenti in the Temple of the Giants, the Temple of Jupiter Atabyrius, of Tabor that is, and perhaps in the Temple of Jupiter Polieus, of Melkarth, upon the Acropolis. As the whole wealth of Girgenti must have been due to her trade

with Carthage, to whom she sold her agricultural produce, this is not surprising. The two cities faced one another across the African sea and were not much more than 150 miles apart. Phalaris perished in a general insurrection in 564 B.C.

We know nothing further of Acragas till Theron became tyrant, probably in 488 B.C. Theron belonged to one of the most illustrious families in the city. His ancestors had come to Gela with the founders of that city from Rhodes, and his great grandfather had led the revolution which overthrew Phalaris. He expelled from Himera Terillus, tyrant of the city, who immediately appealed for help to the Carthaginians. This was probably in 482 B.C. Theron thus ruled over two among the more powerful cities in Sicily and at the same time was in close alliance with Gelon of Syracuse and Gela, who had married his daughter Demarete. Together these two allies faced the Carthaginians when under Hamilcar they landed at Himera to restore Terillus. Theron occupied Himera but was besieged there and sent to Gelon for aid. Gelon marched to his relief and the famous Battle of Himera was fought, it is said upon the same day in 480 B.C. as the Battle of Salamis, the Carthaginians being utterly defeated. So large a number of prisoners was taken and employed as slaves, that both Syracuse and Acragas, but especially the latter, were rebuilt by their labour. The territory of Acragas was increasingly brought under cultivation and its wealth in consequence very largely multiplied. Certainly the city enjoyed great prosperity under the rule of Theron. The most splendid buildings, among them those we see, were then erected, public works, reservoirs and aqueducts were established on a stupendous scale and the city was victoriously represented at the Olympic games. Among the poets who frequented Theron's court, the splendour of which rivalled that of Gelon at Syracuse, was Pindar, who wrote his second and third Olympian Odes in his honour.

Theron died in 472 B.C. A magnificent monument was erected in his name, at which heroic honours were paid to his memory. He was succeeded in the tyranny by his

TEMPLE OF "CASTOR AND POLLUX," GIRGENTI

son Thrasydæus, who by his violence and misrule quickly alienated his subjects and was expelled within a year of his father's death.

Acragas now established a democratic government, which endured for more than sixty years, indeed till the Carthaginian invasion of 406 B.C. This was the most prosperous period the city was ever to enjoy. The revolution which overthrew Thrasydæus had been enthusiastically supported by a citizen who was to come to the greatest eminence—Empedocles, son of Meton. His zeal in inspiring the establishment of political equality, his magnanimous sympathy with the poor, his severity towards the overbearing among the rich, his brilliant oratory, his quite amazing knowledge of the laws of nature, his genius and the reputation of his marvellous powers, which he had acquired by curing diseases and by his successful attempts to drain marshy districts to avert epidemics and to divert obnoxious winds, gave such lustre to his name that he was not only offered the sovereignty, which he refused, but was by many regarded as a supernatural being. Diogenes Lærtius repeats all sorts of stories about his half miraculous powers, which caused him to be regarded as a diviner. Empedocles himself thus addresses the people of Acragas : " My friends who dwell in the great city sloping down to yellow Acragas, hard by the acropolis, busied with goodly works—All hail ! I go about among you an immortal god, no more a mortal, so honoured of all, as is meet, crowned with fillets and with garlands of flowers. As soon as I enter with my followers into the towns I am reverenced, and tens of thousands follow me to learn where is the path that leads to welfare ; some desirous of oracles, others suffering from all kinds of diseases desirous of hearing a message of healing."

Philosopher, savant, engineer, musician, physician, prophet, miracle worker, Empedocles yet found time to be a democratic leader, to give a constitution to the republic, to establish civil equality and to abolish the aristocratic privileges of his time. We know so little of him that it is only dimly we may really grasp what was his real achievement in learning and in science. But the authentic fragments

of his writings which have come down to us show him often to be approaching the solutions of the problems of nature which, two thousand years later, Newton, Darwin and Hegel have perhaps unravelled. He made some experiments with the water clock, recognized the weight of the air, and certainly seems to have had some idea of the chemical atom, knew something of latent heat and of the idea of attraction. He seems even to have guessed the natural selection of animal species and the position of the sun in relation to the earth and the other planets. In botany he was not less clairvoyant, for he seems to have had some notions about the sex of plants.

But the savant in him was doubled with the statesman, and it might almost seem with the wonder worker, the charlatan. He appeared in the streets grave and melancholy in a purple robe with sandals of bronze, a crown of gold or of flowers on his head in the midst of a crowd of young disciples who acclaimed him. He seems only feebly to have denied that he worked miracles, even that he had raised the dead, and he scarcely repulsed those who worshipped him as a god. Was it in disgust of all this of the folly of his friends, the misery of the multitude, the stupidity of men, in disgust at last of himself, who must, minister to them, that he disappeared, vanished away so that no man saw him depart or knew whither he had gone? Some—not his friends—declared that fearing death to be at hand, when it would be evident he was but as any other man, he had left the feast before daybreak and ascended the cone of Etna, and leapt into the crater as into a secure hiding place. And they asserted that they had found one of his bronze sandals cast forth by the volcano. Such was the story. It may be so. But others say he slipped into the sea and was drowned, others assert that he went to Peloponnesus where he died, and others again that he died and was buried at Megara where his tomb might be seen.

However this may be there can be no doubt of the benefits he conferred upon his native city and indeed upon Sicily. He drained the marshes of Selinus and saved the people there from extinction by malaria. He is said to have cleft

the hill of the acropolis at Acragas so as to let in the north wind for refreshment. Certainly from his abundant means he bestowed dowries upon many maidens of the city who had no dowry.

Diodorus tells us that at this time the number of citizens in Acragas was not less than 20,000 and he estimates the whole population, including the slaves, at not less than 200,000. The luxury, wealth and beauty of the city were famous. Following the example of Gellias, the richest among the citizens, open hospitality was offered to all who came to Acragas; and Antisthenes, when he married his daughter, feasted whole populations not only of Acragas but of the neighbouring cities, in the streets. And Acragas was able to remain entirely neutral in the quarrel of Syracuse and Athens. She refused aid of any sort to both combatants.

But this happy and excellent state of affairs was not to endure. A most formidable danger was at hand. The Carthaginians whom the Segestans had called to their aid against Selinus, in the first expedition, in 409 B.C., were content with the sack of Selinus and Himera. But in 406 B.C. they returned, and it was Acragas that was destined to be their victim. The beautiful city was unprepared for such an onslaught. It armed itself in haste, employed a Spartan general, and chiefly owing to the natural strength of the city and the aid of a Syracusan army was able to hold out for eight months before famine reduced it to such distress that, to avoid surrendering, the whole population abandoned the city and migrated by night to Gela. At dawn the Carthaginians entered, massacred the sick and helpless who could not escape, and not only plundered, but destroyed, the city itself. The Temples were overthrown and their columns hewn down by the barbarian. That their work of destruction was never completed was due to Dionysius, who having made himself tyrant of Syracuse in 405 B.C. presently secured peace, and the Carthaginians quitted Acragas in the spring of that year.

Acragas never recovered from this fatal blow. Under the terms of the treaty which Dionysius made her citizens

were permitted to return to the ruined city but were subjected to Carthaginian rule. They returned, and a few years later, after the victories of Dionysius, were able to shake off the yoke of Carthage, when the River Halycus which flowed by the ancient Heralcea Minoa and to-day passes under Cattolica Eraclea, was established as the Carthaginian boundary, nothing east of it being within their administration. Nevertheless, Acragas remained broken till Timoleon, in the general settlement of Sicilian affairs, after his great victory over the Carthaginians upon the Crimissus in 340 B.C., re-established the city with colonists from Velia on the continent, when it again prospered: but it was not the old Acragas, and a generation later it came within the hegemony of Syracuse. Its independent career was over and it never again played any considerable part in the affairs of Sicily save indeed on one occasion when during the First Punic War it forgot all its traditions and sided with Carthage against Rome. Rome besieged it and took it after a seven months' siege. During the Second Punic War it remained faithful to Rome, but was taken by storm by the Carthaginians, who made it their headquarters in Sicily. But it was betrayed by the Numidian soldiers of Hanno to the Roman general, and at the end of the war became with the rest of the Sicilian cities permanently subject to the new mistress of the world.

III

I suppose every one, as I did, begins his exploration of Girgenti, of the old Greek city of Acragas, by a visit to those five Temples along the southern height, which stood only just within the ancient walls towards the sea. Yet these, old as they are, are by no means the oldest Temples of Acragas. Those were the Temples of Zeus Atabyrius, of Athena and of Zeus Polieus, which stood upon the acropolis of the ancient city. This acropolis would seem to have been the rock known as the Rupe Atenea, upon the top of which it is thought the double sanctuary of Zeus

Atabyrius and Athena stood. The Temple of Zeus Polieus is generally supposed to have occupied the summit of the other height where the Cathedral stands to-day above the modern city. And the Temple discovered beneath S. Maria dei Greci, also within the modern city, is said to be that of Aphrodite. Far more celebrated than any of these was the Temple of Olympian Zeus and that stood upon the southern hill just within the walls towards the sea.

To reach these ruins I wandered down through the delicious garden of the Hotel des Temples and on through the groves of almonds and carobs beyond, coming out just above S. Nicola on the dusty highway which I followed to the iron gate of the Temple. A small boy, sent by the *custode*, who was busy elsewhere, let me in, and I presently stood by the prostrate giant and looked upon the hugest ruins I had ever seen.

Those great Doric capitals hurled down by the Carthaginian or the earthquake, those vast drums of the broken columns—how were they ever upraised? They seemed too huge for mortal strength. Why, in the fluting, the *scanalatura* of one of the columns I could stand, but easily, with space to spare. I know nothing save the similar Temple, the similar mass of ruins at Selinunte, which so surprises one; besides these columns those of S. Peter's seem insignificant. Is it only because these are overthrown?

The child climbed over the vast débris encouraging me to follow him; but I sat down there among the flowers, for the flowers have run among these precious stones, caressing them with their beauty; and sometimes looking over the almond blossom up to Girgenti, sometimes looking over the sea-plain to the sea, I began to read Diodorus, who has much to say of this Temple. For, in Girgenti there is time for everything even for so antique an historian as Sicilian Diodorus.

He begins by describing the riches of this countryside which I had only to lift my eyes from his page to see: the wide, deep vineyards richer and more beautiful here, he says, than anywhere else; the whole territory planted

with olives, the fruits of which were exported and sold to Carthage, for Libya was not yet cultivated. So like the Carthaginians that! Those inveterate traders and merchants thought little of agriculture; and so the city of Acragas sold them its fruits, and received money in exchange for the produce of its earth and its labour, thus amassing immense riches, which were nobly spent, as we see. Their monuments, says Diodorus, are a proof of this their wealth.

Those sacred buildings and above all the Temple of Zeus bear witness to the opulent splendour which the people of Acragas enjoyed. But all the other Temples have been burned and destroyed by their enemies, who have more than once seized the city. War in fact prevented this Temple of Olympian Zeus from being finished, for it was never roofed, and since the town was sacked the citizens had no longer the means to complete it, but it escaped destruction. The Temple was a vast pseudo-peripteros with thirty-eight huge engaged columns. It was 372 feet long by 182 feet broad; its cella measured 302 feet by 68; its columns were 55 feet high and not less than 14 feet 9 inches in diameter. Diodorus asserts that it was the largest temple in Sicily. It was as a matter of fact not only the largest in Sicily, larger in every way than the huge Temple G at Selinunte, but one of the largest in the world.[1] It was, Diodorus says, not built in the usual style of a Greek temple with a cella of massive walls and a peristyle, but was designed in a mixed style with half columns as pilasters rounded without, but within showing a flat surface. The porticoes were vast and of a prodigious height. Above the eastern face of the Temple was represented the Combat of the Giants, a work of sculpture remarkable for its beauty and its dimensions. Upon the western face was

[1] The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus was larger. It was 425 feet long, 220 feet broad. The columns, which numbered 128, were 60 feet high. This was the largest of Greek Temples. The area of the Parthenon is about one-third that of this Temple: the Parthenon being 228 by 100 feet. The Olympieum at Athens is 353½ feet long by 134½ feet broad. The columns were 56½ feet high but only 5–5½ feet in diameter. Really only the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus was larger than this Temple of Zeus at Acragas.

shown the Fall of Troy, in which one saw each of the heroes who there played a part.

Of all this what remains? Nothing but a huge heap of ruins and a single colossal figure lying upon its back about which the flowers blow, among them Theocritus' creeping ἑλίχρυσος. Presumably this colossal Telamon with 37 of its fellows supported the entablature, or possibly two such figures stood on either side the great entrance.[1]

Climbing about, up and down over these enormous fragments, after I had wondered enough at the mere size of the capitals and columns and details, all carved in that golden stone, I began to be oppressed by the imperfection of everything, the roughness and the crudeness of the details, of the carved work everywhere. This to some extent was no doubt due to the weathering of the stone after more than two thousand years. But in some measure it was inherent. For these Temples of Sicily were not built of marble, but of stone. They were never meant to be seen naked as they now lie. When they stood beautiful above the sea, in Syracuse, in Acragas, in Selinus, their golden stone was covered by the finest stucco, the colour of pentelic marble and painted in places with bright colours gay and lovely in the sun. This stucco, almost as hard and smooth as marble, remains in many of the flutings of the columns here.

Before the eastern front of the Temple are some remains of a vast altar of sacrifices.

My little guide now led me across the *podere* to a group of columns standing upright which he called the Temple of Castor and Pollux. In fact these columns are a fanciful re-erection, the absurd but most effective corner of a temple, set up from the remains of two different temples by Cavallari. However, the four Doric columns are of great beauty and the whole is very picturesque.

Close by the Temple of Olympian Zeus on the other side of the Porta Aurea stands what remains or has been re-erected of the Temple of Herakles, a line of golden columns against the sea. This was a temple also of the Doric order

[1] The two giants upon the coins of Acragas suggest or seem to suggest this.

but peripteral-hexastyle, surrounded that is by a portico consisting of six columns in front and fifteen on each side. It was the largest of the temples which remain to us in Acragas after the Temple of Olympian Zeus. It contained a famous painting by Zeuxis of Alcmene and a statue of Herakles which Verres tried to steal by night. Until a few years ago only one column of this temple was still standing, but in recent years, largely owing to the initiative and at the expense of an Englishman, Colonel Hardcastle, eight columns have been erected, four of them crowned with their great Doric capitals. I could have wished them undisturbed.

I now made my way, always accompanied by my little guide, to the so-called Temple of Concord on the ridge to the east. This is the best preserved of all the Temples at Girgenti, and even of Sicily, for the Temple at Segesta is but half finished. In its golden beauty it stands up in the sun, really, from many points of view, complete and unspoiled. It dates from the fifth century and its title of "Concordia" is, if it has any authenticity at all, merely of Roman date. Its preservation is said to be due to the fact that in the Middle Age it became a Christian church under the invocation of S. Gregorio delle Rape. But how can that be? It suggests that all this destruction and overthrow was the work not of the Carthaginians nor of the earthquake, but of the Christians. It is true that the Temple of Olympian Zeus, was, till the beginning of the fifteenth century, still largely complete, though overthrown, and that it was then in part removed for building purposes and more lately for the construction of Porto Empedocle.

No; it may be that the enormous labour of destruction begun by the Carthaginians upon these temples in Acragas tired them out; it may be they were interrupted by Dionysius before they were able to demolish more than the three or four temples in the west. But what the Christians had to do with it all remains obscure, and considering their record and our own in such matters, remembering as one cannot but do the rape of the Parthenon, one is loathe to credit them or ourselves with any tenderness for such

TEMPLE OF "CONCORD," GIRGENTI

THE THEATRE AT ACRÆ

buildings as these, in the service of paganism, and, as far as we are concerned, offering such wonderful opportunity for loot.

The beautiful Temple "of Concord," is what is called peripteros-hexastylos, that is to say with columns at each end and along each side, having six columns in the porticoes at either end. All these columns, thirty-four in number, are still standing, as are the pediments and architraves. The cella, which was reached by steps, had a pronaos, that is to say a chamber before it, enclosed by the eastern portico and an opisthodomus in antis, that is to say another chamber behind the cella enclosed by the western portico. The roof has fallen. For its admirable preservation and its completeness, as well as for its touching majesty and grace this Temple remains one of the most beautiful Greek monuments in the world. To-day it stands there, an exquisite casket of golden stone, but you may still trace upon it the remains of the painted stucco which once covered it, so that it stood up over the sea in far off days like a work in pentelic marble decorated in colour and in gold.

I wandered away at last to examine the last of this line of Temples, that of "Hera Lacinia," little more than a line of Doric columns upon the highest part of the ridge. The dedication of this temple seems again to be merely the guess of ignorance, which has confused it with that most famous sanctuary which stood in honour of Hera upon the Lacinian Promontory on the coast of Calabria, where still a single Doric column stands over the Ionian sea. We shall never know in whose honour any of these temples were built, save that of Olympian Zeus.

This Temple called of Hera stood in the north-east angle of the city by the wall above the River Acragas. It was of the same style as, but a little smaller than, the Temple of "Concord," and the cella was in antis. It seems to date from the beginning of the fifth century B.C. and to be somewhat earlier than the Temple of "Concord." It would appear to have been overthrown by earthquake and not by the Carthaginians. Twenty-five of its columns remain, all those of the north side being erect with their

architrave still in place. Nine other columns are partly erect, but the cella, the porticoes, and the roof are wholly overthrown.

It was now near midday and my little guide led me back towards San Nicola where in the delicious convent garden under the stone pine and the cypress I might eat in the shade the Sicilian cheese and the figs I had brought along with me. From that shade, from that silence where the only sound was the hum of the bees among the flowers, I looked back across the almond blossom over the tender green of the young wheat to that line of golden Temples dark against the sky, through whose columns shone the sea; not set in exact line along that ridge carefully of the same height as we might have purposed to do, but in harmonious irregularity, a disorder so perfect that in itself it sang like an air in the Dorian mode, like a line of a motet by Palestrina, as subtle in its beauty, as complete in its perfection, as moving, to me at any rate, in its pathos. That men could have been found, that men could have had the heart, to destroy things so fair. Yes, one might well ask of oneself such a question until one remembered what men daily do to things as fair as these. . . .

That garden of San Nicola is a paradise; one might lounge there many an afternoon reading upon the platform of the piscina or wandering through the alleyways out into the *podere* and the vineyards and back again. Indeed it is hard to tell where garden ends and *podere* begins.

And there is much to be had beside the pleasure of the place itself: the view of the Temples thence, the view of the city, piled up house over house upon the hill under the Duomo, the view over the vineyards and the almond blossom to the hill they call the Hippodrome. And close by is the so-called Oratory of Phalaris—a strange name—connoting I know not what—attached to a Roman building of the second century B.C.

And last, but infinitely well worth seeing for all that, is the ancient church, now under the invocation of S. Nicola. Gothic the guide-books call it: but it is surely the cella of a Greek temple. The solemn façade, as golden as the temples, with its deep portal and heavy cornice, may

technically be "Gothic," but it has nothing of the Gothic soul: it remains Greek and belongs to those Ionian and Ægean isles where you might expect a little provincialism to inform your art, to be as it were a country roughness in a tongue that was itself a dialect. Within, the impression is even more direct: this is the cella of a Greek temple; to-day it is the sanctuary of a Christian church. Something similar may be seen in the church of S. Biagio under the Rupe Atenea.

Close by San Nicola on the other side of the road they have found the remains of an ancient house with mosaics, which is called the Casa Greca. It may be so: but it seems to me indisputably Roman.

In the cool of the afternoon I went down once more to the Temples, and passing out of the Porta Aurea, still clearly indicated on either side the road, I came into the sea-plain and turning, saw the long stretched débris of the ancient walls over the precipitous escarpment and the Christian tombs cut therein, tombs probably of the second century, to which time the catacombs called the Grotta de' Frangapani hereabout belong.

My little guide had not deserted me and presently led me off this road, which leads at last to the ancient Greek harbour at the mouth of the Acragas, and crossing a field brought me to the building known as the Tomb of Theron. Alas, this too is a Roman work and in no wise like the Tomb of Theron as Diodorus describes it—a monument of an immense grandeur, which during the Carthaginian attack was struck by lightning and thus preserved from the fury of the barbarian.

From this miserable make-believe I was led to the site, with its few ruins, of the Temple of Asklepios wherein the statue of Apollo by Myron once stood. These remains lie just within the confluence of the Hypsas with the Acragas, where it is said the Romans were encamped before they took the city.

But it was not these few ruins which enchanted me but once more those temples along the steep. And if they continually drew my eyes in their touching ruin what must they have seemed to the homing triremes of Acragas, when in

all their beauty and fairness, bright with colour and with gold, they stood along the landfall from the sea? And what in their beauty, their glory and their pride must they have meant to those barbarous but acute Phœnicians, whose cities were but encampments, whose thought was only gain, and whose business was the sea?

Not half so much, indeed almost nothing Greek, awaits you in the city itself, the modern town of Girgenti. Those climbing streets, mediæval still, in spirit at least, and all leading somehow or other, through devious narrow ways, up long winding staircases, or under the tunnelled houses, to the Cathedral, are picturesque enough but unhappily contain scarcely a monument worth in itself the trouble of a visit. As you wander about, up and down through the sunlight and shadow of that precipitous town, you happen upon this building or that which catches you for a moment, but not one has any real distinction or beauty except the Cathedral, and not one anything worth a pause except S. Maria dei Miracoli.

The Cathedral, which stands nearly a thousand feet above the sea, was begun they say in the fourteenth century, and may well have stood upon the site of some temple; but it has been so largely modernized and restored that it is now only worth a visit for the sake of its fine old pillars, the admirable wooden roof which covers the nave, and the great treasure of the Sacristry at the end of the north aisle, the famous sarcophagus with its reliefs of the story of Phædra and Hippolytus, which is however only a Roman copy of a Greek original of the fourth century B.C. And yet Roman though it is, something finer than anything Roman, something Greek, seems still to hang about it like a spirit or a perfume, as though it had been so long in this old Greek city that something of its quality had entered into it—the ghost perhaps, restless amid so much misfortune, of Dorian Acragas having found there repose within the thick polished marble carved with the tragic story of Phædra and Hippolytus; that fatal passion so touchingly rendered after all by some reverent young Roman artist, carefully line by line, blow by blow, following his betters. So grave, so lovely, so reserved, how those figures

must have charmed him as he translated them for some snobbish patron who really preferred something much more realistic, without just that annoying spiritual or æsthetic quality, but which here in Acragas, in Agrigentum rather, he found it the fashion to possess. So to-day some barbarian millionaire carries off from the Lungarno in Florence a copy of the Venus de' Medici, but with how much less good fortune, both in his choice of the original and the execution of the copy!

One picks one's way carefully down those steep and storeyed streets from the Cathedral to the little church of S. Maria dei Greci where, beneath the church, the remains, the stylobate and the column bases of a temple may be seen, in a dark tunnel by the light of a candle.

Nor is there much to be found in the Museum: an archaic Apollo, a sarcophagus, some vases and fragmentary marbles.

But at least once before leaving Girgenti one must climb that steep way up the Rupe Atenea, the Rock of Athena, the ancient acropolis of the city, they say, where of old stood her temple for which they have searched in vain.

On that narrow summit it is good to lie at evening, and, in the level light, take in that far stretched view which is said on a fortunate day even to include Etna so many many miles behind us. Yet it is arid enough what you see, the country not of the Læstrygones but of the sulphur miners, a yellow world which seems to reach to the very foot of these enormous escarpments, falling northward so giddily, so precipitously.

Yes, that world of misery and sulphur swirls round the high acropolis of Girgenti and trickles down to the sea at Porto Empedocle. It does not spoil the southern landscape, still enchanted by its temples and its memories, but it certainly sours the Agrigentines and marks them with the stigmata of industrialism. You will as soon get agentle answer as a rough one, let us say, in Girgenti itself; but not as soon in Porto Empedocle.

That hill of the acropolis, which Empedocles split asunder, has let in the north wind with a vengeance; it but passes over that enchanted world at your feet, spell-

bound there as the gods knew how to do, to strike Porto Empedocle full in the face. One begins to understand why the Greek spirit perished from the world, and how it came to die.

CHAPTER X

SELINUNTE

TRAVELLING to-day, in Sicily at any rate, is not what it used to be. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, when Henry Swinburne rode into Sciacca on the evening of December 29 he was received in a manner that I regret to confess it has never been my good fortune to meet with. "The duke of Tagliavia, having been previously informed by my *campiere* that I had letters of recommendation to him, met me out of the town in his coach and lodged me in his own house. The principal persons of the town were invited to meet me and a most splendid entertainment was served up. I found the Sicilian cookery entirely different from that of France or England; sugar and spices were predominant in almost every dish."

Alas, my experience of Sciacca recalls nothing half so pleasant in the way of a welcome as that. To begin with, the way from Porto Empedocle by train is incredibly tedious. Nothing above a *misto* uses this newly opened line, that is to say, the train is made up of goods-wagons, and a few coaches are attached to it for passengers. The rate of progress is unbelievably slow. To cover the seventy-four *kilometri*—say forty-five miles—over three and a half hours, from 10.30 a.m. to 1.3 p.m. are required. One begins to realize one is on the shore of the African sea. . . .

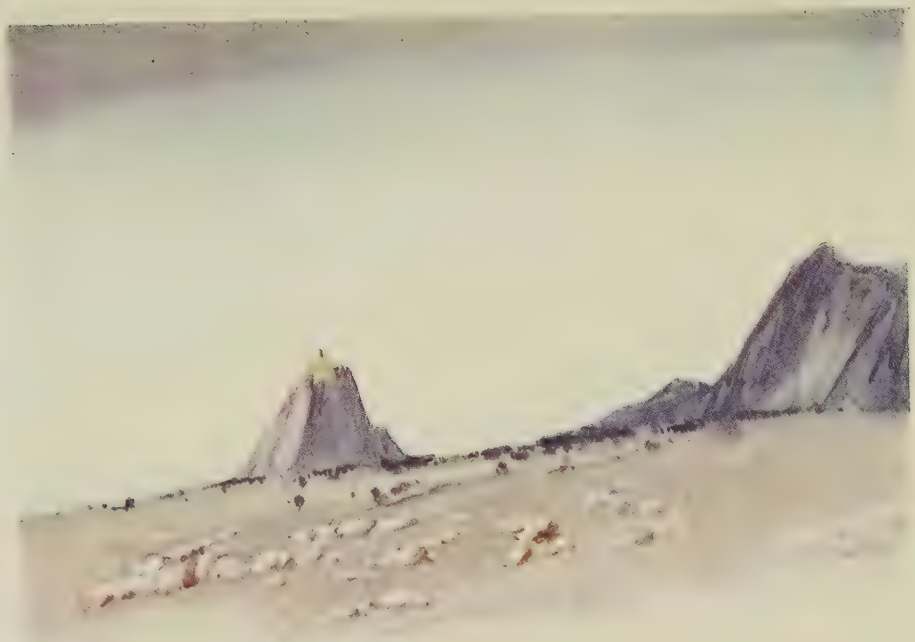
Nor is it only the rate and the discomfort of the journey that remind you of Africa. With every mile you traverse the landscape becomes more and more African, until at Sciacca itself you seem to have climbed up into one of those cities above the littoral of Tunisia or Algeria, and not so much to have left Europe behind, as to be upon

its last frontiers, the frontiers of the southern desert. The African sun pours down upon you, the African sea lies before you like a shield or a mirror dazzling your eyes, and tediously you crawl across a country that grows ever more oriental as you proceed, till when you have climbed up to Sciacca you are convinced that you are on the verge of the desert.

There are, of course, oases in this harsh emptiness, and Cattolica and Ribera amid their vineyards are among them. There are also one or two places of considerable interest. Of these the crossing of the Platani in its wide valley touches one most, for this brackish stream was the ancient Halycus, the river which Dionysius of Syracuse established by the treaty of 383 B.C. as the eastern boundary of the Carthaginian dominions in Sicily. To the east of this stream the Greek cities were to be in safety, Greek civilization was to establish itself unmolested : all west of it was left to Carthage. Did I not say well that we were approaching Africa ?

That treaty of Dionysius was confirmed by Timoleon in his treaty with the Carthaginians after his great victory on the Crimissus. But it would seem that by both these treaties three Greek cities were sacrificed—Himera, Selinus and that Heracleia which stood at the mouth of the stream, but unfortunately upon the left bank.

I had meant to leave the train at Montallegro or Cattolica to visit the site of Heracleia, but found that I should have no time to get there and back to the station to catch the last train for Sciacca that night. I ought to have left Porto Empedocle at six in the morning. I had wished to see the place because recent excavations have brought to light some ruins of the theatre and a necropolis. The city was known of old as Heracleia Minoa. It got its first name from Herakles, who won all western Sicily from Eryx in a wrestling match. This legend, too, points to the essential difference between western Sicily and the eastern and greater part of the island, and suggests that here was the frontier. Its second name it got from Minos, King of Crete, who landed here in Sicily in pursuit of Dædalus, and here founded a city to which he gave his



SCIARE

name. Herodotus, however, seems to regard Minoa as a colony of Selinus, and no doubt he is right in that it was re-colonized from that city, whose frontier it held. The city rose rapidly to prosperity, but was always at the mercy of the Carthaginians. When it was finally sacrificed by Dionysius it seems that he only confirmed the reality of the situation.

The other place of considerable interest before one reaches Sciacca upon this route, is the town of Caltabellotta, which stands in a marvellous situation on the top of a precipitous mountain 2,200 feet above the sea, which, according to Swinburne, whom it greatly impressed by its lofty and inaccessible situation, is the ancient Triocala. The ruins of Triocala, however, are about a mile below, at a place called S. Anna. Here it was that Tryphon and Athenion, two runaways, established the headquarters of the republic of slaves whom they had rescued from bondage, in 103 B.C. From here the Servile War in Sicily was directed, and here in 100 B.C. Tryphon still held out, though he was reduced at last, we know not how.

All this country has even yet a bad reputation for brigandage and lawlessness. Caltabellotta, by its mere appearance, alarms the most sturdy traveller, and I do not know that Sciacca does not confirm him in his fears. Nothing, however, worse than fleas, lack of decent food, and general dirt and discomfort befell me.

Little is to be gained by staying at Sciacca, which has nothing whatever to attract you beyond a very fine statue of the Blessed Virgin in the Cathedral, by Francesco Laurana, which is worth some trouble to see. The aspect of the place, however, on its abrupt rock and overshadowed by the ruins of the castles of the Luna and Perolla families, who assassinated one another during the whole of the fifteenth century, a feud famous even in Sicilian annals as the Caso di Sciacca, is very picturesque. Nothing whatever remains of the Thermæ Selinuntine of which we hear something in antiquity.

From Sciacca one traverses an ever more African landscape to Castelvetrano. Leaving Sciacca by the morning train at eight, I arrived at Selinunte before ten, and was

able to spend the whole day among the most magnificent ruins in Sicily before going on to Castelvetrano about four. Those six hours give you a superficial view of that amazing place, but two or three days are not enough to exhaust its fascination and interest. Nor is there really any reason why two or three days as I found should not be devoted to them.

The inn at Castelvetrano is a just possible hostelry, though it lacks every hygienic appliance, is unheated and not very clean. Still, as things go in the more out of the way parts of Sicily—and in Sicily there are only five towns where you can obtain really good accommodation even if we include Messina: Messina, Taormina, Syracuse, Girgenti and Palermo—Castelvetrano can be endured, for the host is anxious to do his best, and Selinunte is worth almost any trouble to see.

The town of Castelvetrano numbers 22,000 inhabitants, and is deliciously situated in a smiling country of corn and wine and oil, overwhelmed with flowers of every colour of the rainbow. The town itself is worth seeing for a few fine buildings and churches and convents, and it possesses a museum in which, among many objects of minor interest, is a fine archaic bronze statuette of Apollo; but, of course, the main reason for coming to the place is that it is the key to Selinunte, which in many ways is the most remarkable antiquity in Sicily, and certainly as well worth seeing as anything else in the island.

Selinunte lies some eight miles from Castelvetrano upon the low and sandy coast. It is approached through a delicious valley where every imaginable flower and tree and fruitful thing seems to flourish, a real valley of paradise with orange and lemon groves, with almonds and olives, which opens at last upon the wide and sandy plateau, cut by ravines, upon which Selinunte stands.

Nothing anywhere, nothing in Sicily certainly, is more impressive, more tragic in its beauty than the first sight of Selinus lying there over the sea, ruin heaped on ruin, vast column upon column, enormous capital upon capital, temples, palaces, houses, streets, all piled up in gigantic overthrow, in unbelievable disarray. The city seems enor-

mous, seems to stretch for miles over the great sandy steppe, where the palmetto and the wild parsley grow together, and the lentiscus, the agave and the cactus are at home. And at first you think it a real city, till, as you approach it and come within the radius of its influence, its silence, its desolation, you find yourself gazing over the most extraordinary pile of ruins in Europe—stupendous heaps of broken stone, of columns, many of them partly erect, of fallen architraves, of broken capitals, of paved streets blocked by their overthrow, but in which the ruts of the chariot wheels are full of last night's rain.

You come first to the eastern hill, upon which lie heaped up the ruins of three temples, one of them among the largest temples in the world. But the body of the city, with the acropolis, stood upon the western hill, on that ridge thrust out over the sea beyond which lies the River Selinus, at the mouth of which the ancient port was built. The Hypsas lies to the east ; and all before you stretches the sea, breaking here upon a lean, desolate shore between Capo S. Marco to the east and the low Punta di Granitola to the west.

Selinus was a colony of Hyblæan Megara, founded about 650 B.C. Its name is said to have been derived from the wild parsley (*σέλινον*) which still grows so plentifully here, and a leaf of this plant was in fact adopted as the symbol of the city and used upon its coins. It was the most western and therefore, of course, the most in danger of all the Greek cities of Sicily, but it was not, as it happened, the Carthaginian power which finally caused its overthrow. It was Segesta. Segesta was, in fact, the curse of Sicily. A non-Hellenic, a non-Carthaginian city, she was ready to call in either power to suit her own small purposes, and to her more than to any other may be attributed the failure of Greek civilization in the island.

Unhappily, the territories of Selinus and Segesta had a common frontier upon the Mazarus, and as early as 580 B.C. we find the two peoples at war.

Selinus, however, was guilty of siding with the Carthaginians in 480 B.C., though possibly it was to save her life, for she stood upon their confines. But her difficult posi-

tion upon the frontiers of two non-Hellenic peoples, the Carthaginians and the Segestans, was too hard for her. Her quarrel with Segesta in 416 B.C. developed into one of the causes of the Athenian Expedition, for she was supported by Syracuse and, in consequence, deceived Athens took up the Segestan cause. The defeat of the Athenians left the Segestans for the moment at the mercy of Selinus, with the consequence that Segesta appealed to Carthage. Carthage sent a small force at once, and the Selinuntines were defeated, but in 409 B.C. a vast army of at least 100,000 men appeared from Africa, landed at Lilybæum and marched upon Selinus itself. The Selinuntines defended their city with courage, but neither Syracuse nor Acragas was in a position to help them. After a siege of ten days the city was taken, the fighting went on from house to house, and most of the citizens were ruthlessly slain. Indeed, we are told that 16,000 were slain, 5,000 made prisoners, and only 2,600 escaped to Acragas. The walls of Selinus were destroyed, and it was only as subject to Carthage and as its tributary that the remnant of citizens in Acragas was allowed to return. This arrangement was confirmed in the treaty of Dionysius with the Carthaginians in 405 B.C.

That is really the end of Selinus as a Greek city. Its material existence comes to an end 150 years later, when in the First Punic War Carthage removed all the inhabitants to Lilybæum and destroyed the city.

We should, however, probably be wrong if we concluded that the destruction and desolation we now see were wholly the work of the Carthaginians. They may be. But they seem to be too complete for that. The earthquake is probably responsible for much of so final an overthrow, and to the anopheles mosquito, which found a congenial breeding ground in the marshes, are probably due the silence and desolation all around.

It was across this desolation, beautiful with undergrowth and flowers for all its melancholy, I made my way to the acropolis upon the western hill where it is thrust out in a steep headland towards the sea. This hill falls steeply in the west to the marsh through which the Selinus

flows, while another marsh bounds it upon the east. Upon the plateau, in shape like a clenched fist, stood the city and acropolis of Selinus, guarded northward at the wrist by a fortress, parts of which are still in position. The whole was enclosed by a wall, much of which remains, as do more than one of the paved streets and gateways, the way through the city from east to west to the sea gate down to the ancient port at the mouth of the Selinus, for instance, and the better defined and splendid street running through the city just to the west of the Temples from south to north. Such remains, such visible reminders of the everyday life of Selinus, are more touching if less splendid than those of the three majestic temples here piled so high, column upon column, in heap upon heap of carved stone.

These temples, all of the Doric order and of the most ancient style, are all peripteral and hexastyle. Even their names are lost to us and they are known to archæologists by letters of the alphabet. Thus the southernmost temple is Temple A, the great temple north of it Temple C, and that north again Temple D. Temple B is a small prostyle-tetrastyle building which had Ionic columns and Doric entablature at the south-east corner of Temple C.

The largest, the oldest and the most imposing of these temples is Temple C. It measured 230 feet in length by 88 feet in width, the diameter of its columns was 6 feet at the base and the length of its cella was 131 feet, the breadth 29½ feet. Some authorities say it was dedicated to Herakles, some to Apollo. We shall probably never know even that now. It was, however, in this temple that two Englishmen in 1822, Messrs. Harris and Angell (the latter at the cost of his life for he died here of malaria), found the three Metopes and part of the entablature now in the Museum at Palermo. These Metopes represent a Quadriga, with charioteer, and two Victories holding garlands, Perseus beheading Medusa, and Herakles with the Cercopes.

One wanders about these temples, climbing here and there, a little aimlessly, marvelling at the immensity of the columns, the vastness of those Doric capitals—for

what can one do, what can one say before so much beauty irrevocably slain ?—till one turns away at last, to pass, always I think with a vague apprehension, for it all seems as though it was but empty since yesterday, and at last on tiptoe, up and down those streets, in and out of the houses, the foundations of houses, finding here a pile of broken crockery, there a little statue of terra-cotta, here a vase, there a skeleton, a pot of dust, a patch of violets. The only human being you will see in that hushed loneliness which makes you feel like an intruder is, by chance, a little shepherd boy who has left his sheep to see you, so strange a stranger, and who will shyly offer to show you some new or secret thing, a newly-opened sepulchre, a little vase like the calyx of a flower in the bed of the torrent, a tiny broken head of Demeter, the lovely green corroded blade of a dagger or a worn coin of silver, the thin gold of a ring.

Wandering thus through the streets of this dead city, always in silence, where in truth only the flowers are at home, you come out on the north wall, through the gate there, to the fortress restored by Hermocrates in 407 B.C., with its bastions and semicircular tower, its deep trench and well of water. There in the sun you may read what Diodorus has to tell of the end of this great city. How Hannibal the Carthaginian came marching from Lilybæum with 100,000 men and the Segestans, and arrived on the banks of the Mazarus, and there established his base. Marching thence, he divided his army in twain, laid siege to the tall city and began to attack it with his machines. He had, it seems, constructed six towers of a prodigious height, and he battered the walls with battering rams having iron heads, while his archers rained arrows upon the defenders.

The Selinuntines, who had long since lost all experience of sieges, were taken by surprise. The sight of the enormous engines and the multitude of the enemy filled them with terror. However, they prepared to defend themselves, hoping for aid from Syracuse. The young all took arms, the aged prepared the defence, visited the ramparts and exhorted the warriors not to let the city fall into the hands

of the enemy. The women and children brought food and arrows to those fighting for their country, for the terror was so great that one had even implored the aid of the women.

At last the battering rams made a breach in the walls, which had not even been kept in repair. The Carthaginians entered, but were repulsed—the breach was half restored when night fell.

In that night the Selinuntines sent their chief men to hasten aid from Acragas and Gela and Syracuse. But those cities were too far, their help too distant. At break of day Hannibal had renewed the attack, and enlarged the breach with his engines. Backwards and forwards swung the battle; for nine days and nine nights in expectation of succour the Selinuntines thrust back the cruel Phœnician faces, the blue painted savages from Iberia, the Segestans grinning with hate. Till at last from the women watching the battle from the roofs there went up a great cry. The Selinuntines were abandoning the walls, fighting in the streets now, in the narrow ways, in the temples, in the houses. The Carthaginians forced barricade after barricade under a storm of stones hurled from the roofs. The fight lasted till evening, and then at last there were no more stones. The mighty armies poured on and on, till they filled the whole city, and the night was loud with the lamentations of the Greeks, the howling joy of the barbarians. Then the carnage began—the whole population was cut to pieces without distinction of age or sex, the children in their mothers' arms, the women, the old men. According to their custom the Carthaginians mutilated the dead: one wore a girdle of Greek hands, another a necklace of fingers, and all upon their pikes or their javelins bore the Greek head of a man, a woman, or a child. Only the women who had sought refuge in the temples they spared. They gave them their lives, not out of pity, but because they feared that these women, reduced to despair, would fire the temples and thus rob them of their spoil. By midnight the city was looted, was on fire, a single flame; and all the place covered with blood. . . .

In the afternoon the little shepherd led me by a path

he knew across the Selinus to the necropolis that lies there, and behind it to what appeared to be a suburb, with what I took to be a Temple or Propylæa, two great altars and the ruins of other buildings. But I could not stay long away from the great city on the hill. I returned there and wandered out on to the acropolis behind the house of the *custode* where the headland falls abruptly to the sea, and then down the long street westward and out of the sea-gate on to that lonely shore.

Thence at last I made my way back to the eastern plateau covered with enormous ruins which I had passed in the morning on my way to the acropolis.

Here stood three vast temples also nameless ; the southernmost known as Temple E, the next Temple F, the last Temple G. Again I stood amid a confusion of ruin that was bewildering and overwhelming.

From Temple E, possibly the Temple of Hera, for a dedicatory inscription to that goddess was found here in 1865, were taken the five Metopes now at Palermo, representing Athena and the Giant, another so damaged as to be undecipherable, the third Herakles slaying Hippolyte, the fourth Zeus and Hera on Mount Ida, the fifth Artemis and Actæon.

From Temple F came two parts of Metopes also now at Palermo, representing a combat of Giants. These were discovered by Harris and Angell in 1822.

The last, Temple G, was, like the Temple of Olympian Zeus at Girgenti, never completed. Like that Temple, too, it was one of the largest in the world, only slightly smaller than the giant of Acragas. It measured 371 feet in length, 177 feet in breadth ; the columns were 53½ feet high, 11¼ feet in diameter at the base ; the length of the cella was 228 feet and it was 59 feet broad. It is said to have been dedicated to Apollo.

It is impossible to express one's wonder or one's admiration at these mighty buildings now for so many ages laid low. In their presence they seem to impose a silence upon one and that silence endures. They are beyond our comprehension to-day, we have lost the sense of their reasonable and perfect beauty, which we do not in the least feel or

understand. Too much romantic darkness lies behind us; we are more than half barbarian still. Unlike our mediæval churches—for we have long ceased to build at all in that sense—these temples were not built to accommodate a crowd, or for the assembly of a vast congregation. They were the sanctuaries of the gods, but the gods were implicit in the whole landscape which they consecrated. Our cathedrals, our abbey churches were far otherwise: they were embattled against the world; the saints in their heavenly windows looked inward into the darkness, where in an isolated starry radiance Christ lay upon the altar, and a multitude convinced of sin and of death crouched on the pavement in fear and in self-reproach, or in an ecstasy of adoration. Reason can find no place in such buildings as these: it did not create them; they are not informed or inspired by its spirit. They are of the crowd and have always satisfied it.

But these . . . I cannot say how they were built or quite in what lay their intention, for I am a stranger, a barbarian from the farthest isles on the verge of the ocean. But they satisfy in me what those of my home can never satisfy, are not indeed aware of; a demand, a need for something reasonable, serene, absolute, and perfect; something which is and is satisfied, which cannot change, in which no progress, no development is possible, because it is itself complete in itself, and is thus—if you can see—that beauty which is truth, which "is all ye know on earth and all ye need to know."

That evening I met the Director of the Museum of Castelvetrano, the kindest of men. I took the opportunity of asking him about my countryman Angell, who lost his life here among the ruins of Selinus, dying here of malaria in the 'twenties of last century.

He could, however, tell me nothing of him, and the *Dictionary of National Biography* can tell me no more.

I asked the Director whether Angell had been buried here, as I should wish to visit his grave. But he could not tell me this either.

Then I said: "To-morrow I shall go to the Campo

Santo and see ; for how can they have taken him away . . in those days . . . from this distant place . . . over so many mountains . . . without roads or means of transport . . . so far from home ? "

And he answered me : " Signore, did England then ever lack a ship for her own ? " The good Director !

I regret that I was unable to learn anything of Angell in Castelvetrano. I should like to have stood beside his grave for a moment, and it grieved me to depart without learning anything of him. I should be grateful to know whether he lies at home or in Sicily. I think something might be done in Castelvetrano in memory of him who met his death among her ruins and marshes.

CHAPTER XI

MAZZARA, MARSALA, MOTYA, TRAPANI, MOUNT ERYX

SELINUNTE is the last city of Greek Sicily: it is into Africa one comes immediately on leaving the oasis in which Castelvetrano stands at the head of her smiling vale: a country of long rolling dunes, arid and treeless for the most part, with here and there, something that till now has been absent from the landscape, groups of tall palms on the verge of the sandy waste that loses itself at last almost imperceptibly in the sea.

And though one cannot but regret the landscape of Greek Sicily, its variety, its mountains and valleys, its rocky headlands and stony plateaux, where on the cliff top the shepherd feeds his sheep, in the stony torrent bed the neatherd leads his goats from spare pasture to pasture, in the deep vale the herdsman pipes while the kine browse in the shade, still this arid world which one enters so suddenly at Mazzara has its charm, wholly subject as it is to the sun, to the infinite sky; a desert of pale gold, without the variety of a European landscape, in which abide the many deities of the hills, the valleys, the streams; having something of the formidable and monotonous uniformity of the desert, which cries all day long: There is but one God: Allah . . .

Mazzara, Mazzara del Vallo, in some sort seems to sum up this strange country. At least, wretched as it is to-day, it was there in the ninth century the Saracens began to make themselves masters of Sicily, establishing their seat of government at Panormus, for all the western division of the island, which was known in our language as Val di Mazzara. For in the ninth and tenth century Sicily fills

her old rôle once more in the old tragedy which has been played over and over again. She becomes again the prize in dispute between Europe and Asia, not now between Greece and Carthage, between the smiling and human gods of Paganism and the bestial Semitic Moloch, but between Christendom and Islam, between Christ and Mahomet.

Already in 655 parts of Sicily had been plundered by the Saracens and the victims sent to Damascus. Another raid had been made from Alexandria. Then as before came treason. Syracuse which had with perfect constancy always faced and outfaced the Carthaginian, calls on his successor the Saracen to aid her in her revolt against the Byzantine. Syracuse in 826 offers Sicily, the island of Sicily, to Ziyadet Allah, prince of Kairawàn. In 827 Saracen armies landed at the Punta di Granitola, between Selinunte and Mazzara, and during 138 years the conquest of Sicily, there begun, continues, till the Saracens are able to administer the island, which for this purpose they divide into three valleys, known in our tongue as Val di Mazzara in the north-west, Val di Noto in the south-east, and Val Demone in the north-east.

The first Saracen settlement was in the Val di Mazzara, and it roughly corresponds to the old Carthaginian occupation, confirmed to Carthage by Dionysius in 391 B.C., comprising the whole of western Sicily beyond the Halycus. The capital was, like the later Carthaginian capital, at Palermo, and it was thence the conquest and the administration of the other parts of Sicily, the Val di Noto and the Val di Demone, were directed : to be established until first Byzantium in the person of that great Captain George Maniaces in 1038, and then in 1060 the Normans Robert Guiscard and Roger appeared as the champions of Christianity, the deliverers of Sicily from infidel bondage.

The Saracen conquest occupied as I say 138 years from 827 till the last strongholds fell, Taormina in 963, and Rametta in 965. The Saracen administration continued undisputed for another 73 years, till George Maniaces begins his four years of Christian victory to be followed by the reconquest, the thirty years' work of Robert Guiscard and Roger, begun in 1060. During all that time, for

about two centuries and a half, Europeans were subject to Saracen rulers, Christians to Moslems. Of course the condition of the Christians varied; in one place they were just personal slaves, in another free communities subject to tribute. That is merely to say that the Saracen conquest was not achieved all at once. But when in 965 the conquest is complete, those free communities have disappeared, many have become Mohammedan, and those which remain Christian are utterly enslaved, subject, like the Christian communities to-day within the Turkish dominion, to massacre and contempt. There remained in spite of everything, these three things in Sicily: Saints, Scholars and the Greek language. Side by side with these was established the religion, the learning and the art of the Saracen.

Mazzara saw the beginning of all this, and its successful establishment. You would not think it, for nothing of it at all remains there to-day—nothing that is of the Saracen dominion. But the old castle in the south-east corner of the wall which Count Roger erected in 1073 and the Cathedral which he founded, may be called fortresses against the Saracen dominion and the Saracen faith.

That Cathedral, however, bears scarcely a mark of its origin to-day. Within, it has been quite recently restored and is wholly without character, its few treasures being works by the Gagini and their school; a group of the Transfiguration by Antonello Gagini in the choir, a statue of S. Vincent in the chapel in the left transept, and a statue of the Virgin and Child in the chapel in the right transept, where is also the fine sarcophagus of the Bishop Montaperto, also by one of the Gagini. The ancient sarcophagi in the sacristy are Roman, not Greek, works.

Nothing here indeed bears witness to the Saracen or even to the Byzantine. Some memory at least of both remains however in S. Nicolò near the Porta di Mare, where you find a square church under a central cupola, rather like the church of the Admiral in Palermo, a work in which the Normans have employed the consummate craftsmanship of the Orient to build in its own way, though in their service.

Upon leaving Mazzara one enters a country that might

seem to be all a vineyard, and in so far to deny its African character, and the Carthaginian and Saracen who were masters here for so long. But these vineyards are comparatively modern and bear witness not even to Sicilian but to foreign enterprise. Here is grown the Marsala wine which Messrs. Ingham-Whitaker, Florio and Woodhouse manufacture.

Marsala itself, with its 27,000 inhabitants, its busy prosperity, its warehouses along the quay, its commercial air, might seem quite a modern place, and indeed it is an end rather than a beginning. To find that beginning you must take a boat in the harbour and row five or six miles up the low islanded coast till you come to the island of S. Pantaleo, which is the Carthaginian Motya. Here was the beginning of Lilybæum, of Marsala that is.

Motya lies three-quarters of a mile from that low and sandy shore, to-day lined with salt factories, to which it was joined of old by an artificial causeway, something of which remains. It lies in an extraordinary position within the long low Isola Grande which was perhaps of old an isthmus joined on the north to the mainland ; and it was just what it seems likely to have been, the site of the first Phœnician colony in Sicily, a commercial station that is, a depot of those great traders who were fond of choosing such sites, as we are to-day. What Hong-Kong is to England in regard to China, Motya was to Carthage in regard to Sicily.

It is the custom of all modern historians to depreciate the Phœnicians and their successors here, the Carthaginians ; but they were the greatest seafaring people of whom we have any knowledge. Their ships were the best in the Mediterranean, and their sailors, unlike the Greeks and Romans who were terrified of the sea, had sailed the ocean, perhaps circumnavigated Africa, and certainly cruised north as far as the British Isles and perhaps even to Iceland. If a work of maritime engineering had to be carried out it was the Phœnicians who proved to have the greatest skill, as for instance in the matter of the Athos Canal, when they alone were successful, and as Herodotus says, " they showed therein the same skill as in all else

that they do," adding this, that "there is a meadow hard by, where they made a place for buying and marketing." To them also we owe the alphabet. But they were cursed with a cruel and hideous religion; and though in this they are no worse than other barbarians, for their Moloch is not a whit more cruel than his cousin the Jewish Javeh, they have been held to be damned for it, and their gradual disappearance and final dispersion or absorption by Rome hailed as a merciful deliverance. Their genius, however, was extraordinary and complementary to that of the Greeks and Romans. Had they endured, one may think that neither natural science nor discovery and commerce would have languished for so many ages as they did.

Here on Motya they established themselves and their market, and like all their other depots in Sicily this too passed in time to their Carthaginian kinsmen. Thucydides tells us that the Phœnicians had settlements all round Sicily on promontories along the sea coast which they walled off, and on the adjacent islets, for the sake of trade with the Sikels. But when the Hellenes also began to come in by sea in large numbers the Phœnicians left most of these places and settling together lived in Motya, Soloeis (Solunto) and Panormus (Palermo) partly because they trusted in their alliance with the Elymi (of Mount Eryx and Segesta) and partly because from there the voyage from Sicily to Carthage is shortest. In fact the voyage from Motya to Carthage is not 100 miles.

So Motya remained perhaps the greatest Carthaginian stronghold in Sicily till in the year 409 B.C. Hannibal, who had been called on by Segesta after the defeat of the Athenian Expedition, moored his great fleet behind the island after he had landed at the headland of Lilybæum, and begun his march upon Selinus, the first of the Greek cities to be overthrown. So it was finally upon Motya that Dionysius wreaked his revenge when he broke the Carthaginians in 397 B.C. He besieged the place with 45,000 men and 200 ships of war and 500 ships of transport. The Carthaginians cut the causeway and though few in number, relying upon help from Carthage, prepared to resist him. Dionysius then built a mole of earth from

the mainland to the island. Upon this mole he constructed a new and formidable engine, the catapult, then used for the first time. A great fight took place upon the mole, but little by little the Greeks battered the walls to pieces and the long resistance having exasperated them, when they entered they put all to the sword, men, women and children, without sparing age or sex. This was exactly what the Carthaginians had done at Selinus. There is nothing to choose between Greek and Carthaginian in matters of this kind.

Dionysius garrisoned Motya, but the next spring another Carthaginian general Himilcon landed at Panormus with a huge army and took it.

Motya, however, never re-arose. Himilcon decided that another spot upon that coast was better fitted for defence. That spot was the headland of Lilybæum, the most western point of Trinacria, of Sicily. Thither he transferred what was left of the inhabitants of Motya which then disappears from history.

Lilybæum possessed a fine harbour upon the north and it was there Hannibal had landed his great army in 409 B.C. There was water there too, for a spring gushed forth from a cave on the promontory, as it does still. Naturally of great strength, for it is surrounded on three sides by the sea and defended eastward by marshes, it was rendered stronger by art, and was able to hold out when all else that was Carthaginian in Sicily was overthrown. In 276 B.C. it alone withstood Pyrrhus who abandoned the siege after two months ; and from 250 B.C. in the First Punic War it withstood the Romans for ten years and was only abandoned at last when the Roman victory of the Ægates in 241 B.C. compelled the Carthaginians to conclude peace.

As a Roman town it was the headquarters of the fleet in the Second Punic War and it was from Lilybæum that Scipio sailed to conquer Africa. Indeed it plays its part all through Roman history ; and when the Saracens occupied the island they attached so much importance to it that they re-named it Marsa-Allah, the Port of God, whence its present name is come. It was the Emperor Charles V who destroyed it, for he blocked up the harbour

SICILIAN CART

to protect it from the Barbary pirates, and ever since Trapani has taken its place as the chief port of western Sicily.

Really nothing remains of Carthaginian Marsala or of the Roman city either. The white and oriental city of to-day is altogether given up to two modern industries: the manufacture of salt and the manufacture of wine. This last was introduced here by the Englishman John Woodhouse about 1770; and the immense caves of the English firms still in business here—Ingham-Whitaker and Woodhouse and the Italian Florio are well worth a visit.

Nor should an Englishman at any rate omit to visit the Duomo, which strangely enough is dedicated in honour of S. Thomas of Canterbury. How this came about I have never been able to discover.

The Cathedral is in form a latin cross divided into three naves by sixteen marble columns which are said, I know not with how much truth, to have been intended as a present to Canterbury Cathedral. Here are various works by Sicilian artists. In the third chapel on the right is a marble statue of S. Thomas the Apostle with a relief of the Incredulity of the saint by Antonello Gagini. In the right transept is a picture of the Presentation in the Temple by Mariano Riggio da Messina (1593). In the chapel right of the choir is the early sixteenth-century tomb of Antonio Liotta. Other works by the Gagini and their pupils are to be seen in the chapel to the left of the choir. The church also possesses eight magnificent Flemish tapestries of the sixteenth century.

The little Museum in Via Caserma XI Maggio, by the Library, is worth a visit. It contains numerous antiquities, though nothing of much importance; a marble torso of a man, a mosaic pavement, an early Christian sarcophagus and a fifteenth-century triptych of the Adoration of the Magi.

In the Carmine church is a Madonna and Child attributed to Laurana as well as works by the Gagini; and in the strange little church of S. Giovanni Battista between the city and the sea is a statue of the saint by Antonello Gagini. Here one may descend by steps to the so-called Grotta

della Sibilla Cumana. Here is the spring of fresh water of which Diodorus speaks, though what it has to do with the Cumæan Sibyl I was for long puzzled to determine. The Cumæan was the most celebrated of the Sibyls—those prophetic women of various countries and times. She it was who was consulted by Æneas before he descended into Hades. Livy tells us she came to Italy from the East, and it was she who according to tradition appeared before king Tarquin offering him the Sibylline books for sale. The guardian of the church seemed to think that the Cumæan Sibyl had been buried here: a fact which might have interested Samuel Butler, but which I confess I could not make head or tail of, though it is amusing to note that Victor Bérard connects the Phæacians with Cumæ: and Butler maintains that Phæacia was Trapani and the "authoress of the Odyssey" was Nausicaa herself. Perhaps in the tomb of the Cumæan Sibyl these delightful but mutually destructive theories may be reconciled.

I say nothing of Garibaldi and his Thousand who landed here in 1860 to conquer Sicily. The landing which was not undisputed was possibly assisted or encouraged by the mere presence of English men-o'-war.

From Marsala I went on through a country which in spite of the sun, the palm trees and its southern air had, perhaps by reason of its windmills, something of Holland about it, in its flatness and subjection to the sea, but that sea was the African and as blue as a sapphire stone. I came at length to Trapani, the town which has for all purposes of the sea supplanted Marsala, and found clean if not very comfortable quarters at the Grand Hotel, opposite the landing stage.

Here at Trapani it is all a matter of coming and going, for many steamers going and returning to the Eastern Mediterranean call here and it is the nearest port for Tunis, for Africa.

Trapani is an empty little town wholly or almost wholly of the sea, burnt white in summer by an implacable sun, windswept in winter and as old, nay older, than history. It contains nothing whatever in the way of a work of art unless it be the lovely rose-window in the Templar's church

of S. Agostino, for the Crucifixion by Van Dyck in the Cathedral has been repainted and the Andrea della Robbia in the church of S. Maria di Gesù is a school piece.

Nevertheless, a day or two may be very pleasantly spent in Trapani, along the shore there under Monte S. Giuliano in view of the Ægadian isles rising up so steeply and exquisitely in the west, and then there is Eryx . . .

Trapani, the ancient Drepanum or Drepana, was in the first instance certainly not a Carthaginian foundation. For ages before the Carthaginians visited these shores it had probably served as a port and dependence of the neighbouring city of Eryx upon that great isolated hill to the north of it, which we call Monte S. Giuliano, but which was famous throughout the ancient world as Eryx, the site of a most primitive and renowned Temple of Venus.

Drepanum thus appears first in connexion with certain Trojan legends which it shares with Eryx and Segesta the sanctuary and the cities of a people certainly non-Hellenic and as they liked to think of Trojan origin. These people, whatever may have been their real descent, because of their tradition and belief played a great and even a determining part in the history of the island. Because they were non-Hellenic their quarrel with Hellas in the person of Selinus was impossible of solution. Because their quarrel was insoluble they called in first Athens, then Carthage, and finally Rome, to try and decide it in their favour. The last succeeded and from that moment these people cease to be of any account and disappear from history. Rome in fact was exceedingly flattered to find a link with a people who had so long claimed a Trojan descent. She flattered and supported them because their very existence flattered and reassured her. The greatest of her poets makes the most of this, draws it out of its vagueness, gives it life and definitely alots Trapani a place in the voyage of Æneas, makes it the scene of the death of Anchises and of the funeral games celebrated in his honour by Æneas. The thing was done. Legend becomes in a moment more actual than history, becomes real and immortal in the hands of genius.

Drepanum comes into history proper with the First

Punic War. About 260 B.C. the Carthaginian general Hamilcar fortified the promontory and founded a town there to which he transferred most of the inhabitants of Eryx. Like a true Carthaginian he had noted the excellence of the harbour, far better than that of Lilybæum and quite as convenient to Carthage. Drepanum remained one of the chief Carthaginian strongholds throughout the war and in 250 B.C. it and Lilybæum were the only two places in the island that remained in Carthaginian hands. Then during the ten years' siege of Lilybæum it became the headquarters of the Carthaginian fleet which in 249 B.C. sailed out to defeat and indeed annihilate the Romans under the consul P. Claudius, a defeat amply avenged seven years later off the Ægadian isles.

Those acts of the Carthaginians whereby they removed the inhabitants of Eryx—and more than once—to Drepanum point to Eryx as the real originator of Drepanum.

Now Eryx lies about six miles north of Drepanum two miles inland from the sea-coast. It is in the first place the mountain Mons Eryx now Monte S. Giuliano, an isolated peak that looks far higher than it is, for in fact it rises only 2,465 feet above the sea. Virgil, like many others, has been deceived by its isolation and its abrupt rise from the sea plain and has spoken of it as a mountain really on an equality with Etna 10,000 feet high. "Vast as Athos, vast as Eryx," sings Virgil in the seventh Æneid.

The fame of Eryx was due above all not to its height or to its situation, but to the sanctuary which stood upon its summit, the Temple of Venus, founded it was said by her son Æneas, the Temple of Venus Erycina.

Diodorus tells another story. He ascribes the foundation both of the temple and of the city, to a hero named Eryx who during Herakles' journey through Sicily wrestled with him and was thrown. This Eryx a son of Venus and Butes the king of this country is by Virgil called the brother of Æneas.

But all these legends of Drepanum, of Eryx and of Segesta, point to the same fact recorded by Thucydides that these three cities belonged to a non-Hellenic people. Thucydides thus explains it. "On the capture of Ilium

some of the Trojans who had escaped the Achæans came in boats to Sicily, and settling on the borders of the Sicanians were called as a people Elymi, while their cities were named Eryx and Egesta." That is all Thucydides says, but Diodorus goes further and relates in detail the tradition of their arrival and settlement here. It is here comes in the hero Elymus the Trojan. Strabo says he sailed from Troy with Æneas and took possession of Eryx and Lilybæum and called the rivers about Egesta, Scamander and Simois, and in this as in other legends Egesta is the city of Acestes.

It is obvious then that in these places we come upon a people not native to Sicily as the Sicanians were, nor even immigrants like the Sikels, yet a people which had been established in Sicily in this corner of Sicily for many ages before the first advent of the Greeks. The notion of their Trojan origin may be true or it may point only to a "Pelasgic" extraction. At any rate the part they play in history is consistently anti-Greek in a fashion really definite beyond anything which the natives were capable of. We see them constantly leagued with the unappeasable enemies of the Greeks, their cities, their philosophy and their culture, the Phœnicians of Motya and Panormus, the Carthaginians of Carthage. Yet in their building at least, and indeed in their religion they are much nearer the Greeks than the natives who appear as mere savages, and than the Phœnicians and Carthaginians whose oriental rites were obnoxious to the Greek mind. They are said to have become Hellenized, but what is the evidence of this ; the Temple and Theatre at Segesta, the works of art there which Cicero describes ? They are a mystery that in all probability will never be made plain.

It takes about an hour and a half in the public automobile to go from Trapani to the town of Monte S. Giuliano on the summit of Eryx. The journey is very well worth while if only for the ever widening view which opens before you as you ascend, of the Ægadian Isles, Hiera, (Maretimo) with Monte Falcone, the most distant, Aegusa (Favignana) and Phorbantia (Levanzia), then the plain to the south with Marsala : these to the west. To the east rise up the

mountains of San Vito; to the north the headland of Cófano; and to the south they say the Island of Pantelleria and Cape Bon, in Africa.

This view must in fact repay the traveller for in Monte San Giuliano itself there is almost nothing to see: two works by Gagini, one in the Cathedral and the other in the Biblioteca, and a Madonna by Francesco Laurana also in the Cathedral, the old restored towers and the Castle now a prison. Practically nothing is left of the famous Temple of Venus—a few foundations in the castle, the Arco del Diavolo and the reservoir in the castle garden. But you may see still something of the ancient walls of the place if you go out of the Porta Trapani and pass round to the Porta Spada. These vast blocks are said to bear Phœnician characters.

The Temple of Venus Erycina was according to Strabo "well filled with women sacred to the goddess, whom the inhabitants of Sicily and also many others offered in accomplishment of their vows"; but he goes on to say that in his day the temple was not near so well supplied with priestesses and women as aforetime. Diodorus his contemporary, however, tells a different story. He says the goddess had a particular predilection for this temple and that unlike others, which after an increasing fame lose their splendour and are neglected, this alone although very ancient has never ceased to be famous and to be sought after and to increase in estimation. He tells us that through long generations the Sicilians venerated this goddess and offered her magnificent sacrifices as later did the Carthaginians. In fact the Carthaginians seem to have recognized in her their own Astarte or Ashtaroth and of course the ritual and mysteries here were obscene, and not likely to perish as less fundamental rites might do. The temple was enormously wealthy in silver and plate and it was this wealth which the Segestans displayed to the Athenian ambassadors as that of the private citizens of Segesta and thus helped to tempt Athens to launch the expedition against Syracuse in 415 B.C. Pausanias declares that this Temple of Venus Erycina was not less wealthy than that at Paphos.

A beautiful and curious rite seems to have been practised here and certainly marks this cult as in part at least Phœnician. For the goddess yearly left her Temple on Eryx for a journey to Africa, and took her doves with her and Athenæus records that " At Eryx there is a certain season which the Sicilians call ' The Departure,' at which time they say the goddess is departing into Africa. At this time all the doves of the temple disappear as if they had accompanied the goddess on her journey. And after nine days when the festival called *καταγώγια* that is to say ' The Return ' is celebrated first a single rose-coloured dove returns flying across the sea, no other than Aphrodite herself, and when it has flown into the Temple the rest follow speedily. And on this, all the inhabitants around, who are well to do, feast, and the rest clap their hands for joy. And at the time the whole place smells of butter which they use as a sort of token of the return of the Goddess."

So these doves of Sicily " the fairest shaped of all their kind " to the eye of the mind at any rate, bore Aphrodite to and fro over her own sea between the two heights, visible the one to the other, of Mount Eryx and the Promontory of Hermes. But Venus waxeth old, as Lyly has it ; once she was a pretty wench, when Juno was a young wife ; now crow's foot is on her eye and the black ox hath trod on her foot, and no mortal any more goes up to Mount Eryx because of her.

CHAPTER XII

SEGESTA

SO one morning that promised well, but did not keep its promise, I set out for Calatafimi and Segesta. All went well as long as I was in the lowland country, but as the day grew older and I began to enter the hills the wind got up and with the wind came the rain. I hurried on ; there was nothing else to do, it was too late to return, and in all the twenty miles between Trapani and Calatafimi there is no town, no village even, where it would be possible to sleep. The way grew steeper as I advanced into those dark mountains, which at every turn seemed to grow more savage, more hostile, more threatening ; and when at last buffeted and weary, wet to the skin and very much afraid, I came into the Gaggera valley and presently turned up the steep by-way to Calatafimi, I was so weary and undone that even the horror of the miserable *osteria* there did not appal me, was in fact most welcome in spite of its dirt and misery.

After a restless and unhappy night I arose to find the rain gone but the wind still buffeting about the miserable streets. It was still very early, but I wondered even more than I had done all night, why Samuel Butler had chosen this wretched village to live in ? Why here of all places in Sicily ? There was Syracuse—but the unique and individual character of Syracuse may have baulked him, or perhaps he remembered the young German savant who declared that Syracuse was a place to be born in or to die in but not to live in . . . There was Girgenti, there was even Castelvetrano . . .

And then suddenly at a turn of the way a little below the town I seemed to understand. The clouds had blown

away, the sun shone forth, the blue sky appeared, the hills stood clear; and there aloft among the summits, and literally in the sky, stood a Temple—it seemed not made with hands—serene and perfect established for ever in the heavens. It was of the Doric order, still and solemn, and yet so ideal and full of grace it was impossible to believe the human heart had conceived such perfection or human hands contrived such beauty. It stood there on high amid those savage hills like a thought in the heart of God, like a benediction. Its light confounded their darkness, its calm their wild disorder, its perfection their tragic chaos. A man who had once been blessed with this revelation must ever desire to return to it, could not but return to it, in spite of every danger and every difficulty, for here alone was harmony and peace. One would say like the Apostles on the Mount of Transfiguration: it is good for us to be here.

There is nothing whatever to be seen in Calatafimi, even the *osteria* which once bore the name of Samuel Butler is now known as the Garibaldi, for Garibaldi in this neighbourhood won his first victory over the Bourbon troops after landing at Marsala. A street, however, is still named after Samuel Butler.

And so presently I made my way down that twisting path to the highway, to the valley, and trudged on through an ever wilder landscape on the road to the ford over the Gaggera whence that Temple, so wonderful a vision from Calatafimi, might be reached.

The country was wild and bare, the terrible mountains everywhere towered up about the narrow valley, but the valley itself was as lovely as they were harsh and jagged, and one half forgot the tragic mountain landscape in that delightful vale. So I went on through the boisterous spring morning till the valley opened northward and I came to the place where the ford was, where the ford was said to be.

But no ford was there. The great rains of the previous night had swollen the torrent, till, without wading, it would have been impossible to cross, and even so, those yellow waters looked highly disagreeable, not to say dangerous.

So I sat down in that bare place and began to consider these things. Nothing was in sight, the Temple had been hidden all the way from Calatafimi, and there was not a house or shed in all that terrible landscape, nothing but the mountains, wild and bare, harsh rocks, the great lines of the jagged hills, the savage ravines and the chaos of the wind.

And as I, disheartened, considered my case, it came to me that this torrent which barred my way was of old called the Scamander ; and remembering this I drew out of my sack the little Oxford *Iliad* that goes with me, and read in the XXIst Book : how Achilles in his sorrow and his madness fought with the Trojan river, of which this is a namesake and a memory, for as Strabo says and Diodorus also, the fugitive Trojans who founded Segesta named the streams here Simois and Scamander in memory of their home.

And the verses of Homer, as often before, so here, acted like a charm. For no sooner had I come to those lines in which the tragic and despairing soul of Achilles calls upon Zeus, and Poseidon and Pallas Athene stand beside him, who was like to be drowned in the raging flood, than there stood before me two men with mules as though awaiting my pleasure.

Very far were they, as at once became evident, from the immortals : unless indeed they were the servants of that thief Hermes. For they at once began to demand of me incredible sums of money, taking advantage of Scamander's wrath. And presently, after many, too many, words, we came to agreement, and I saw that it was not my doom to be vanquished by the river, nor, beyond what was fitting, by them neither. So I mounted the white flea-bitten mule, and they took the other gaunt beast, and one after the other we entered furious Scamander and came safe across to the other side.

But why should the traveller who has to face so many hardships in Sicily that it will take a hundred years to do away with, why should the unfortunate traveller have this also to bear ? Surely there should be a bridge across the Gaggera ? All through the year, but especially in winter,

travellers and tourists in great numbers visit Segesta. All are at the mercy of the peasants, who reap a rich harvest, because at this place there is no bridge over the Gaggera. I do not grudge the peasants their gain ; but I object to being forced to mount their wretched mules amid a pile of ragged and verminous clouts that do duty for saddles. This is objectionable even for me, and is a thousand times worse for a woman, who has certainly not come from Palermo prepared to ride straddle on a foul beast that is nothing but a flea bag, supported by a peasant who is a great deal worse. Let the ambition of Signor Mussolini embrace this also, to be Pontifex Maximus. It was among the imperial titles and might be adopted without prejudice to any Papal right, if it carried with it the most obvious duty it implies.

So we crossed the stream, not without difficulty, and began to climb the long hill over the bare downs up to Segesta. That road, if road it can be called, is after rain little better than a morass. Open to every wind that blows it receives like a steep torrent all the rain of the hills, and on that morning the mules were over the fetlocks in a peculiarly slippery mud which made the going exceedingly irksome. Little by little, sometimes going forward, sometimes floundering back, we pushed on, till after some three-quarters of an hour we came to the house of the *custode* immediately under the hill of the Theatre, the main hill on which stands the Temple, now in full view, still to be overcome. It was done at last and I alighted amid the barking of sheep dogs very stiff and weary on the very steps of the Temple in a great meadow of asphodel.

In spite of the dogs of the *pastori*, which soon slunk away, or at least ceased their cerberus baying, what struck me first was the immense loneliness of this sanctuary literally among the mountain peaks. It stands there, half inaccessible as it is, among those terrible mountain heights, where only the sun and the wind and the rain are at home, on a great lofty platform, about which a wild ravine winds, in a harsh meadow of the most inhuman of all flowers, that ghost of a flower, the asphodel. Fittingly do those flowers, which belong to the dead, surround it, for it lives

if at all that half life of the departed, and might well have been found by Odysseus in that dim world where even Hector and Achilles would meet ineffectively, their spears falling from their nerveless hands, their shields from their sides. Even for those voices to be heard, to vibrate ever so feebly upon the stagnant air, that rite of blood was necessary, which filled the trench with the black life of the sacrificial rams and sheep. Those asphodels, so faintly purple, the mere ghosts of flowers, might well flourish in that world of mist and cloud, where the powerless dead abide in the house of Hades.

The shrill wind moaned and whistled through those pale columns as through a forest of stone. Strange birds, vultures or eagles,—harpies maybe—circled above the incomparable skeleton, screaming and beating their wings against the dark and jagged cliffs of the ravine, and between the bursts of pallid sunshine a bitter rain beat upon the stones from which a faint and golden light seemed to shine. It is enchanted, this hollow temple of the dead ; in silence it awaits the voices it has never heard, the chant of the priests of sacrifice, the voices of the hierophants, the lowing of the victims.

I lifted my eyes and looked around. The landscape in its incredible, its terrible and majestic beauty, intercepted thought, insisting on its tragic loveliness. I cannot describe its far stretched symmetry, which the sun would suddenly glorify, line after line of mountain, peak beyond peak, over valley and forest, to a far away glimpse of the sea, of deepest and loveliest blue, between the awful beauty of those savage, those infernal hills.

Amid this sublime world, summing it up, as it were, and expressing it, the Temple stood, a symbol of that Hellenic effort, which, though unachieved, has redeemed mankind : its reason resolving that sublime unreason, its calm summing up that infinite chaos, its security and establishment denying that terror, its beauty explaining that wild and savage energy, that harsh and unappeasable life.

Presently, when the wind seemed to abate a little, I set out to climb the other hill, half an hour away, on which the Theatre stands, really, save the débris, the only other

THE THEATRE, SEGESTA

GREEK STREET AT SELINUNTE

monument of this solitude, of this fateful city, which, here in the presence of that Temple, seemed to bear witness to something older than any Hellenic foundation, in which all that came to such perfection later was tragically implicit, bearing witness to that crime of burning Troy.

Is that too fanciful? Come then to these savage hills on which that white Temple stands like a flower; or, lying there on a calm and fortunate day of spring, amid the warm stones hidden in the tall asphodel, read as I did the last book of the Iliad, read again the most sublime verses that it has been given to mortals to repeat, read again the Ransom of Hector. Those columns, that architrave, these hills and this beauty shall explain what I mean; something, maybe, rather to be felt than understood.

Far loftier than the hill, the isolated hill, upon which that Temple stands, the hill of the Theatre is upreared almost precipitously over the valley, and gives you a far wider, and, indeed, a more noble prospect, in which the lines of that far stretched landscape become serene, become harmonious and musical. The hills rejoice on every side, are joyful together, and as the Hebrew prophet foresaw, seem about to break forth into singing. Before you think of the Theatre it is they which you see: yet it is the Theatre which, as it were, marshals them in such array, as though in some majestic dance to the music of the spheres.

The Theatre opens and looks almost due north to that wonderful jewel of sea lying there beyond Castellamare. The hills rise up from the south-west, and first amid those incomparable and musical lines stands up Monte Sparagio; then as your eyes travel north far loftier Mont' Inice and so beyond the folds, fold upon fold, is disclosed to you the sea, the headland of Capo di Rama, and the far hills of the Monti Palermitani above Álcamo, that Arabian place. Then, in ever nearer and harder lines, the hills rise one above the other in the north-east, to Monte Bonifato and so to the savage hills I had crossed.

It is hard to drag one's eyes away from such a prospect and turn to the Theatre which has given it life.

One comes up to the Theatre from behind, across the site of the city itself, Segesta of old, through some few unrecognizable ruins and fragments of walls scattered amid the asphodels. It catches your breath. Here on this hill top, among mountains over 3,000 feet high, you suddenly find yourself looking across a building almost as complete as the Theatre of Syracuse, though on a smaller scale. It still possesses the usual semicircular *præcintio* and sixteen tiers of seats in excellent preservation. The building is formed in a fold of the hillside on the steep rocky slope, its general form and arrangement are purely Greek. The *theatrum* proper, which is 205 feet in diameter, is divided into seven *cunei* with *vomitori*. The orchestra in part remains, but nothing, or almost nothing, is left of the stage. And for me at least that stage is not haunted by the ghosts of the tragedies of Æschylus or Sophocles, for I cannot believe that it was not always filled, as the whole Theatre is to-day, by that marvellous landscape of mountain and valley and sea, the little towns shining on the dark hillsides, Álcamo, Partinico, Borgetto, Balestrate, Montelepre ; and beyond, between the mountains, the beauty of the sea, blue as the eyes of Cassandra which were like the violets, and, like her, too, to-day, with the aspect of a wild beast newly caught.

Yes, even in the most fortunate hour, that landscape has something savage and untamed about it, like the beauty of Cassandra in the car of Agamemnon, awaiting in the sun and the red dust the commands of Clytaimnestra, and crying out upon Apollo.

So I thought, as I made my way carefully over the stones down to the Temple precincts upon the lower hill. Segesta has something of the tragedy of Troy about it, of Troy, which, according to Thucydides, here no doubt adopting a tradition current among the Greeks, was the author of its being. For some of the Trojans, he says, who had escaped the Achæans, came in boats to Sicily and settling on the borders of the Sicanians, were called as a people Elymi, while their cities were named Eryx and Egesta. This tradition was readily accepted by the Romans, who, because of it, eagerly claimed a kindred origin with the

Segestans. Segesta herself came to believe that she had been founded by Ægestus, the Acestes of Virgil, and as all the ancients were fond of doing, ascribed to this personage a semi-divine origin, saying that he was born of a Trojan damsel Segesta by the river god Crimisus. Now the Crimisus has always puzzled the geographers in spite of the fact that Timoleon won his great victory over the Carthaginians upon its banks. It would, however, appear to be the Fiume Freddo which flows into the Gulf of Castellamare after passing Segesta about five miles away to the east, on the other side of Calatafimi. The rivers of Segesta were, as we know, the Scamander and the Simois, Trojan streams, to-day represented by the Gaggera and the Pispini I suppose.

However all this may be, it is certain that the Greeks always regarded the Segestans as barbarians and yet distinct from the Sicanian and Sikelian natives. They themselves believed themselves to be Trojans, and either in consequence of this tradition, or for other and less fundamental reasons, of which we can discern little, they were consistently the enemies of the Greeks, while as Trojans they were petted and flattered by Rome, when she herself began to look for an ancient descent.

If then we take the Segestans at this old valuation, we can at least understand such works as this Temple and the Theatre ; for what we know of Troy leads us to consider her as at least the equal of the Greeks in civilization and culture. And if the Segestans were isolated, at least they had thus a tradition as lofty as the Greeks, and were able to find among the Greeks a common civilization if not a common policy. There can indeed be no doubt that this was so : for it is not only their monuments which attest it, but, much more significantly, their coins also : these bear Greek inscriptions and the unquestionable character of Greek art.

But if this be so, it must be remembered, too, that we never hear of Segesta in all its history except as the enemy of the Greek cities of Sicily. She is first mentioned in 580 B.C.—as early as that—as in dispute with Selinus. It was another dispute with Selinus which was the origin

of the Athenian Expedition, and following that disaster, we find her constantly in league with the Carthaginians, the relentless enemies of everything Greek.

In 397 B.C., when Dionysius of Syracuse launched his great effort against the Carthaginians in Sicily, he laid siege to Segesta and the city was only saved by the landing of Himilco. But though she escaped, she could never be at peace with the Greek, and when in 307 B.C. Agathocles on his return from Africa was received into Segesta as an ally, they were unable to stomach it, and their disaffection caused him to turn upon them and put the whole city to slaughter, over 10,000 being put to the sword, their women and children sold into slavery, and the very name of the city changed to Dicaeopolis.

Segesta in some sort recovered from this blow and resumed its name, but its real character seems to have been lost, for we find it joining Pyrrhus on his expedition into Carthaginian Sicily, and it presently fell altogether into the hands of Carthage. At the opening of the First Punic War it seems to have recognized its affinity with Rome, for it joined that cause, as soon as it was able, and put the Carthaginian garrison to the sword. Rome in consequence favoured Segesta and exempted it from all taxation.

Of its position under the Roman administration we get some idea from Cicero.

"Segesta," he says, "is a very ancient town in Sicily which its inhabitants assert was founded by Æneas when he was flying from Troy and coming to this country. Accordingly the Segestans think that they are connected with the Roman people, not only by perpetual alliance and friendship but even by some relationship. Now when Segesta was at war with the Carthaginians it was sacked, and everything which could be an ornament to the city was transported from thence to Carthage. There was among the Segestans a statue of Diana, of bronze, not only most sacred, but wrought with the most exquisite skill and beauty. On account of its beauty it seemed even to their enemies worthy of being worshipped. Some ages afterwards, Publius Scipio took Carthage in the Third Punic War; after the victory the same Diana was restored

with the greatest care to the Segestans. It is taken back to Segesta; it is replaced in its ancient situation, to the greatest joy and delight of all the citizens.

"It was placed at Segesta on a lofty pedestal on which were cut in great letters the name of Publius Africanus; and a statement was also engraved that 'he had restored it after taking Carthage.' It was worshipped by the citizens; it was visited by all strangers; when I was quæstor it was the very first thing they showed me. It was very large and tall with a flowing robe, and in spite of its size it gave the idea of the age and dress of a virgin; her arrows hung from her shoulder, in her left hand she carried her bow, and her right hand held a burning torch.

"Now when Verres, the enemy of all sacred things, the violator of all religious scruples, saw it, he began to burn with covetousness and insanity. He commands the magistrates to take down the statue and give it to him, and declares to them that nothing could be more agreeable to him.

"But they said that it was impossible for them to do so; that they were prevented not only by their religion but by their respect for the laws and the courts of justice. Then he began to entreat, to threaten, to excite their hopes and arouse their fears.

"They opposed to his desires the name of Africanus. They said it was the gift of the Roman people. It is refused.

"Afterwards, whatever burdens he could impose in respect of exacting rowers, or in levying corn, he laid upon Segesta beyond all other cities, and a good deal more than it could bear. He harried the Segestans individually up and down the land, and threatened each one to ruin him, and to them all in a body he announced the ruin of their city.

"Therefore the Segestans, subdued by ill-treatment and by fear, resolved to obey his command. With great grief and lamentation on the part of the whole city, with many tears and wailings on the part of all men and women, a contract is advertised for taking down the statue of Diana.

"See now and know, O judges, that among all the Segestans none was found, whether free-man or slave, whether citizen or foreigner, to dare to touch the statue.

"Some Barbarian workmen were brought from Lilybæum. They at length, ignorant of the whole business and of the religious character of the image, agreed to take it down for a sum of money, and took it down.

"Then, as it was being taken down, how great was the concourse of women, how great was the weeping of the old men, some of whom even recollected that day when that same Diana was brought back to Segesta from Carthage, and had announced to them by its return the victory of the Roman People. How different from that time did this day seem! . . .

"What is more notorious throughout all Sicily than that all the matrons and virgins of Segesta came together when Diana was being taken out of their city; that they anointed her with precious unguents, that they crowned her with chaplets and flowers; that they attended her to the borders of their territory, with incense and with burning perfumes . . .

"And when this crime had been executed, as the pedestal was empty but the name of Publius Africanus stood upon it, in fear of scandal he took away the pedestal also.

"Now, O Publius Scipio, I appeal to you . . ."

That glorious rhetoric which first bewildered, and then stirred as with a trumpet, the days of my boyhood, seems here in this very place and to-day to make these hills echo with that glorious name.

But where stood that statue, in what sanctuary or forum, upon the hill of the Theatre or the hill of the Temple? Its very situation is lost to us, and even the rumour of its beauty has died away among the echoes of these savage cliffs. By what road did it enter with rejoicing, by what gate did it pass with its unguents and flowers when it was borne away and only the empty pedestal bearing that tremendous name, resounding over Africa, remained.

Only the Temple stands, empty, roofless, grass-grown, a portico of columns, a harp for the wind.

It is a Doric peripteros-hexastylos of thirty-six columns dating from the fifth century B.C., but seems never to have been finished. The columns are unfluted, the basement

incomplete, the cella never begun. It is 200 feet long by 85 feet wide and its columns are 29 feet high with the capitals, and 6 feet in diameter at the base. In colour it is a golden cream full of light.

It is a beautiful mystery. Why it was never completed we do not know, but it remains even in this inhospitable place the best preserved temple in Sicily, and its simple and majestic presence among these bare mountains is overwhelming. Artemis herself were not more austere.

I could scarce drag myself away from this spot so full of the tragedy and the beauty of the past. But the afternoon was drawing to a close, already the sun was sinking upon the mountains, the shadows of those wild peaks were growing longer and longer, the air was full of gold; upon all that far stretched landscape the beauty and benediction of evening were beginning to fall.

The peasants were eager to depart, they feared to be overtaken, it seemed, in such a place, by the twilight at the end of the day. The valley was malarious and it was as much as my life was worth, so they explained, to remain at nightfall among these hills.

So I dragged myself away, though over the Temple the new moon was setting, and out of the great ravines the vast shadows of darkness were already stretching forth their hands upon Temple and peak and rude mountain side. The flowers had closed their blossoms, the sheep were already folded in some cave for the night, the lamp was already lit in the house of the *custode*.

I turned away, and slowly upon Beppina, the white mule, I rode down the rough descent.

Had I but known it, it was to Greek Sicily I had said farewell in the twilight there among the hills.

CHAPTER XIII

PALERMO

I SUPPOSE Palermo, the great Bay of Palermo with its lofty promontories thrust out into the sea, so noble in outline and in mass, Monte Pellegrino on the west, and Monte Alfano on the east, the city set as it were in a natural amphitheatre between them on the shore of the blue jewel-like sea, its palaces and turrets and minarets seen against the dark background of far flung mountain, and surrounded by the richest of all vales, the Conca d'Oro, running up in an ever narrowing valley into the great bare hills, with its olive gardens, its orange and lemon groves, its fig trees and almonds, its palms and agaves and its infinite flowers: I suppose Palermo is one of the loveliest places in the world.

And yet, look at it as you lie outside the great bay, tossing in a *barca*, maybe, through a whole afternoon; or better, as you come in from the large on a great ship at dawn; and lovely though it is you will have to admit that it cannot compare with the Bay of Naples, with its far stretched headlands, its lovely citadel height of S. Elmo, its sentinel island of Capri and, above all, the exquisite outline and colour of its volcano Vesuvius.

Palermo, the Bay of Palermo, has not the character or the variety of the Bay of Naples, has nothing of its large serene and classic beauty. Its loveliness is at once more harsh, as in those mountains, more Oriental, as in those minarets and domes among the palms. Those two beautiful but fantastic headlands are not the portal, you feel, to any quiet European city: it is as though between them you were drawn into the enchanted world of some Arabian

romance, fair and languorous and cruel, where all the women are veiled and all the swords are curved, where the voices are harsh but the footsteps softer than silk, where in the deep shade of the gardens under the moon all night long to the splash of the fountains the nightingale sings.

Much the same impression awaits you in the city itself: that fantastic architecture at once cold and hysterical which meets you everywhere in those curiously untidy streets may have been built, but was certainly not conceived, by a really European people. Those famous churches with their minarets and domes, their ceilings of honeycomb, their coloured tiles, their golden walls, their marvellous multicoloured mosaics—these are no Christian sanctuaries, they were never built for One who was Crucified; they presuppose Mohammed's paradise, and their cloisters are gardens of love hung with sweet smelling flowers and golden roses and red. Those palaces of brick or yellow stone whose curved walls are covered with fantastic lacework, whose windows all look within, whose patios and inner courts are filled with the noise of fountains and the scent of flowers, they must have been ours by capture for they presuppose the eunuch and the gynæceum; and those gardens half lost in the deep shade, with their palms, their bamboos and bananas, their sweet spices, their cinnamon, nutmeg, and ginger, their papyrus and coffee trees, their tangle of brilliant flowers, they are the oases of the desert and have nothing to say to us that we can understand.

This impression, so insistent as in the summer heat one wanders aimlessly about this curiously confused city, at once so noisy and so silent, is borne out in the streets, where each vast piazza is a desert of dust wholly subject to the intolerant sun, and each street an alleyway in a bazaar, fantastic with stuffs and gaudy wares, with bright curtains and awnings and blinds, beyond which the sun has smitten everything into a uniform silence and stillness. How full those streets are, how slowly, how languorously the city moves, and yet always it might seem with the expectation of violence!

Linger at night on the seething Marina where there is

music, watch the amazing spectacle in all its extraordinary noise and confusion, its half suppressed animalism under the great summer stars beside that placid sea. Watch them all, men, women, children, with their air of exhausted delight, eyeing one another, appraising one another, chattering and gesticulating, eating *gelati* of all shapes and colours before the innumerable booths, drinking violent coloured syrups or sipping sherbet, while under the full moon across the shallow harbour pass the little ships of the Orient, their tall lateen sails like the wings of great birds floating in the silvery darkness.

Or pass into that strange Cathedral that has suffered every sort of violation and seek the tombs of the masters, of the kings, here in their capital. Those vast sarcophagi of porphyry under their canopies borne on columns of porphyry can never have been hewn by any Christian hands for any Christian burial. They are as defiant of time and eternity as the Pyramids: the dead, whose indestructible home they are, look for no resurrection, their bodies anointed with unguents and swathed in infinite tissues of purple and gold and loaded with all the ornaments of the East, will never return to dust, hidden and locked as they are in their fortressed chambers of porphyry, against which even the Trumpet of the Resurrection will echo in vain.

For the conquerors were conquered: the victor became the victim. How could the winds and orchards of Normandy but falter and wither in this air full of perfumes and spices under the pitiless sun?

Yes; for all that Byzantium might attempt, for all that Normandy could do, Palermo remains Oriental still, Phœnician, Saracen, a city of Asia which has consumed conqueror after conqueror, absorbed them all one after another into her dark soul and pulled the flower of their spirit to pieces with her cunning delicate fingers, petal by petal. Byzantine, Norman, German, French and Spaniard are as chaff before the subtle wind of her spirit: she absorbs them all one after another, converts their souls to her soul, and returns to her origins.

And just that is in fact her history. Sicily, the very nodal point of the Mediterranean world, was always in

PALERMO SEA FRONT

dispute between Greek and Semite, between Europe and Asia—Asia which had spread over North Africa. Well, here in Palermo Asia has won. She went down before each European conqueror as he came, but in her defeat she conquered, she enraptured, she enchanted his soul. In a few years after his victory he scarcely remained European, was scarcely any longer a Christian, her subtle and profound learning enthralled him, her exquisite art bewitched him, her fatal philosophy absorbed him, the secret of her spirit, her odalisques, her children, her gardens enclosed, her infinite languor enslaved him : he was hers. Here you may see what he built, read what he wrote, know what he thought, see how he lived, learn how he died. He was hers. Here even the persistent and tragic soul of Spain loses itself, its identity, becomes insane.

The Saracen conquest, preluded as it was by many a raid from Syria, began in earnest, and from Africa in 827 at Mazzara, upon the old frontier between Greek and Phœnician. It continued for 138 years. It began very slowly, but in 830 new forces arrived from Spain, and Panormus, Palermo that is, fell into the hands of the Mohammedans and remained there till the advent of Roger the Norman two hundred and thirty years later. The great struggle thus begun goes on, with Syracuse as the champion of Europe. Palermo was now established as the Mohammedan capital, the seat of the Emir, and slowly Sicily becomes an Aghlabite principality, owing a formal allegiance to Kairawàn. The island is divided into "vallies"—the most firmly held of which is Val di Mazzara in the west, which corresponds largely with Carthaginian Sicily, Val di Noto in the south-east, and, the most precarious, Val Demone in the north-east. It takes ten years to secure Val di Noto, and in the meantime Messina falls. In 859 the central fortress Enna (Castrogiovanni) is taken, and this proves to be the key to Val di Noto. Syracuse still holds out however. Then in 875 Ibrahim ibn Ahmad ascends the throne in Africa ; the Emir Ja'far ibn Ahmad in Palermo is ordered to press on. The siege of Syracuse is begun in 877 and in the following year the Greek city passes for the first time into non-European hands. In

895 Sicily is really wholly lost to the Greeks by a treaty signed by the Saracens and the remaining Christian towns. There remained Val Demone without Messina ; but with the fall of Taormina and Rametta in 908 the conquest is largely complete, though insecure, for these fortresses are retaken and only finally pass to the Mohammedans in 965. The whole island was then in Saracen hands, a province of Mohammed.

Yet even so I often think, we fared better at the hands of these Saracens than they would have done then at ours. For the Christians enjoyed some toleration. To a certain extent liberty was accorded them. Only those found in arms were reduced to slavery. And it would be impossible to deny that from the point of view of material prosperity the Saracen domination was beneficial to Sicily : much more beneficial possibly than the Roman had been. In agriculture for instance great advances were made in wonderful new systems of irrigation, and new plants such as the sugar-cane, the cotton-tree, the mulberry and the quince were introduced. And the Saracens built too : Palermo is said to have possessed 300 mosques ; and literature flourished exceedingly. In the middle of the tenth century a census was taken and there proved to be in the island a population of 2,807,000 of whom 1,590,000 were Mussulmans. An admirable system of administration and taxation was established which was inherited by the Norman conquerors.

Nevertheless the hope of the reconquest of Sicily was never given up by Byzantium. In 1027 a great army had been assembled for this purpose, but Basil II died before it sailed. Then in 1038 George Maniaces, the great soldier of his time, was sent by Byzantium and delivered many towns including Messina and Syracuse, and indeed is said to have reconquered the whole island excepting Palermo. But after the recall of Maniaces all, except Messina, was soon lost.

Now in those Byzantine armies were men of many nations, and among them three young men, the elder sons of an old knight named Tancred de Hauteville living at Coutances in Normandy. He had followed Robert, Duke

of Normandy, the father of William the Conqueror. This old knight lived in his castle of Hauteville surrounded by his family of twelve sons. Too poor to leave each a patrimony worthy of his birth he had encouraged three of them to seek their fortunes in the south. They and their Normans had borne the brunt of the Sicilian campaign, the eldest, William of the Iron Arm, killing the Saracen chief with his own hand, but when they claimed their share of the spoil they were refused. They therefore crossed the Strait of Messina and fell on Apulia, then a Byzantine province. To their standard flocked every discontented interest in the south, Ardoin and the Lombards and their own countrymen of Aversa, those in the service of Salerno and of Monte Cassino. They were successful.

From time to time the other sons of old Tancred joined their brothers in southern Italy, Robert Guiscard in 1047 and the youngest Roger ten years later.

Roger, the "flower of the flock," was then twenty-six years old. "He was a youth," the old Chronicler Malaterra tells us, "of the greatest beauty, of lofty stature, of graceful shape, most eloquent in speech and cool in counsel. He was far-seeing in arranging all his actions, pleasant and merry with all men, strong and brave and furious in battle." He shared with Robert Guiscard the conquest of Calabria and proved his genius. In 1060 the two brothers decided to conquer Sicily. In the May of that year they crossed from Reggio and took Messina, which became thus their *point d'appui* and capital. Everywhere they were expected and welcomed by the Christians. After ten years of fighting and intrigue Roger laid siege to Palermo which, with his brothers' help, he took in 1071.

The conquest went on. Taormina was taken in 1078, Syracuse in 1085, Girgenti and Castrogiovanni, the latter by reason of the conversion of its chief, in 1086, Noto in 1090. The whole island was thus reconquered in thirty patient years of fighting—a whole generation. In 1098 the Papacy granted to Roger (now Count), and his heirs the office of Apostolic Legate in Sicily.

Thus was established the most strange, the most successful and the most brilliant administration that Sicily had

seen since the decline of the Greek cities. The Normans in fact had acquired a state in being, wealthy, ably administered, and possessed of a far higher culture, not only than their own, but than that of any other country in Europe. They were unwilling to destroy all this, they sought rather to win and to enjoy it. They thus became its heirs. The Mohammedan religion was everywhere tolerated, but—and in this too they only imitated the Moslem rule—conversions from Christianity to Islam were prohibited. Nor in fact were conversions from Islam to Christ enthusiastically encouraged, perhaps because Roger largely depended upon, and certainly used, Mohammedan troops, and these were obviously more uniform and manageable, and probably more trustworthy, unconverted.

So the two creeds flourished side by side. The Saracens in the towns had their own quarters, mosques and schools, and at Palermo they were secured in the complete enjoyment of their own lands administered by their own officials. In Girgenti they seem to have really possessed the whole city, but Messina and the whole Val di Noto was mainly Christian. In the western part of the island and in the capital things were much the same as under the Saracen government: indeed we read that French and Italian women who had come in with the conquest adopted the Oriental fashion of dress—a capital fact; and certainly the administration was conducted on Oriental principles. It could not be otherwise since Roger practically took over the whole machine, both court and administrative. In regard to taxation, for instance, he found a machinery in excellent working order to his hand, officials well acquainted with resources, accounts, books, schedules, most complete, accurate and in order. He adopted this bureaucracy and it made him the richest monarch in Europe. His edicts ran in Arabic as well as in Greek and Latin: his coins and money were stamped with Cuphic characters, his very jewels bore Semitic inscriptions.

In regard to his Court too, Roger adopted all the custom and ritual of an Eastern potentate. In outward appearance it might have been the Court of the King of Persia. All was hung and all were clad in the silks woven on Arabian

looms here, by Theban and Corinthian slaves. Viziers, chamberlains, ushers, pages, masters of the wardrobe, and all the innumerable paraphernalia of an Eastern Court were continued, and with this result, that at Palermo Europe beheld for the first time a Court of lofty culture and artificial manners; full, of course, of intrigue, but a society carefully maintained, in which men of letters, scholars, poets, philosophers, astronomers and the mysterious students of natural science were not only welcome but in some sort set the key and maintained the tone of this society. Here in Palermo Ptolemy's *Optics* were translated from Arabic into Latin: the Prophecies of the Erythrean Sibyl were also made accessible, and in one of the mosques Roger found the relics of Aristotle suspended like the precious relics of a saint might be in a Christian church. Roger himself pen in hand assisted in the compilation of a work on Universal Geography and in the construction of a map of the world, assisted by twelve geographers, Christian and Mussulman, and had it engraved upon a silver disk; and Jewish physicians served and Arabian poets immortalized him.

The Court, all that was most living and most brilliant in Palermo and in Sicily, whiled away its leisure among languorous odalisques, monstrous eunuchs and graceful Persian boys in the wonderful gardens and villas which Saracen art and Saracen craft built for the pleasure of the new masters: villas of an ineffable delight, through whose fretted courts many fountains flowed, whose gardens were paradises of love amid the deep shade of orange-groves, of whispering palms and cool myrtles, where birds tuned their tender notes among a tangle of scarlet passion flowers, of pools in which bright fishes swam under perfumed lilies, and the branches of blossoming trees leaned down to smile at them.

Great churches arose, but rather mosques than churches, under clustering minarets and turrets and encrusted with marvellous Byzantine mosaics of all colours, glistening in a semi-darkness, a cool shadow and sheen and glimmer of gold, beneath roofs of exquisite carved honeycomb with long pendentives dripping from the golden multi-coloured

roof, the walls carved with Cuphic legends, and inset with gems or enamelled tiles still more brilliant, and lovelier.

Three civilizations, three religions, here met and seem to have dissolved one into another without disaster. In Palermo a Greek Bishop was first restored, but he was succeeded by Latins who were also established in every see actually founded by Roger. The Pope, Urban II, visited Sicily and seeing the state of affairs and hoping for a Latin victory, granted to Count Roger special ecclesiastical powers, appointed him and his successors hereditary legates of the Holy See. Greek ritual however continued and still lingered in Messina till the fifteenth century.

Three languages were current—the Greek, the Latin and the Arabic : the Court language was French. In the event Latin in the form of the Italian dialect was to win, but till the end of the twelfth century Sicily was the one country in Europe where men of different faiths and different tongues might live together in peace side by side, trusted and favoured according to their individual deserts. So happy a state of affairs, as we should certainly regard it from our point of view to-day, could not endure : while it lasted it was most brilliant, but it was short lived. It was in fact the happy negation of the barbarism we call nationalism. There was not—there never has been—a Silician nation. Till yesterday this was also true of Italy and made of her the mother of us all.

Roger the great Count died in 1101 ; he was succeeded for a moment by his son Simon, but in 1105 Roger the First ascended the throne as King of Sicily. This man came also into the Norman dominion in southern Italy, and thus founded the kingdom our fathers knew as the Two Sicilies, comprising about one-third of Italy and by far the most stable dominion within it. This kingdom was established as a fief of the Holy See.

Roger I died in 1154 and was succeeded by his son William the Bad, who reigned till 1166, when he was succeeded by his son William the Good (1166–89.)

With William the Good the best of that too brilliant day was over. He had no children and tried to obtain the

succession of his aunt Constance, wife of Henry VI of Germany, son of the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. But he failed, and on his death the crown passed to Tancred the illegitimate grandson of King Roger I. Tancred died in 1194 and was succeeded by his youthful son William III. Then came the Emperor Henry VI and conquered Sicily and Norman Italy with a bestial cruelty that, as his son and Constance's, Frederick II, was to prove, seems to have been inherent in that blood.

Frederick—Stupor Mundi—was crowned in Palermo in 1198. He was then four years old and under the protection of Pope Innocent III. During his minority Sicily suffered from every sort of anarchy and his frequent absences in his manhood led to a major change in the character of the island, for the Saracen revolt of 1243 led to a removal of many of the Saracen population to Lucera. The Greek element too was in decline and under Frederick—one might almost say in spite of Frederick, for Sicily was his best beloved country, he spoke all its three tongues and was certainly not unsympathetic to Islam, was indeed known as the Sultan of Lucera—the Italian culture, language, influence and population increased and dominated the whole island. Italian became the speech of the court of Sicily and largely through Frederick's own genius it became the language of a new literature, born in Sicily, in Palermo, which was to develop into the Italian of Dante and Boccaccio.

On Frederick's death in 1250 his son Conrad, his grandson Conradin ascend the throne ; but behind them both lurks the beautiful tragic figure of Manfred, Frederick's illegitimate heir. In 1258 Manfred, on the rumour, false as it proved, of the death of Conradin is crowned king in Palermo. There followed a universal chaos, in which the Pope, the cities themselves, the various royal interests, all struggle for mastery and out of which Manfred emerges momentarily victorious.

Finally the enmity and the envy of the Pope were too much for him. The Papacy as overlord sold the Silician crown to the highest bidders and finally Urban IV granted it to Charles of Anjou, who could be trusted, he thought,

to do what the Holy See decreed and hold Sicily unquestionably from the Papacy.

Charles was crowned by the Pope in 1266, broke Manfred at Benevento, established himself at Naples and held Sicily as a province of his new kingdom. The whole island revolted and was degraded, oppressed and enslaved. For sixteen years Charles was able with the help of the Papacy to maintain this cruel folly; revolt was followed by persecution and appalling suppression; the island ran with blood; till out of the chaos rose up the daggers of the Sicilian Vespers, following on an insult offered to a Sicilian woman in Palermo, and it is said not a single Frenchman was left alive in the island.

Sicily appealed to the Pope, who supported the Angevin and blessed the cruel fool who had lost his kingdom.

Manfred had a daughter, Constance, now Queen of Peter, King of Aragon. He watched and waited, till, when Charles was besieging Messina, a parliament at Palermo was persuaded to choose him for king, and a struggle of twenty years began between Anjou and Aragon in which finally and after many curious adventures Aragon was triumphant in 1295.

Thus upon the amazing palimpsest of Sicanian, Sikelian, Phœnician, Greek, Carthaginian, Roman, Byzantine, Saracen and Norman, the cold indifferent arrogance of Spain is imposed at last—to endure—to endure in a sort of death until Garibaldi in our fathers' time awakened the island from its frozen silence with the shouts of his Thousand —*Viva Italia.*

For all that, Sicily remains to-day something outside Italy—outside the Italian tradition. Who thinks of Italy in Syracuse or Girgenti? Who could think of anything there but of Greece. In Palermo certainly the Greeks are as absent as the Normans, but it is not of Italy you think, but every hour of the day in monastery, church or Cathedral, in the Palace Palatine, as in the half vanished loveliness of La Favara, La Cuba, La Zisa, in the moonlight on the Marina as in those burning streets, it is the orient you discern; and you hear—or overhear is it?—that Arabian tale, that rhythmic air, which whether in Syria or in Africa,

in Spain or here in Sicily tells the same story over and over again, under the minarets of San Cataldo, in the cloister of San Giovanni, in the Cathedral of Cordova, on the hill of the Alhambra, in the mosques of Damascus or the streets of Kairawàn.

II

So the history of Palermo, that so strange story, is perhaps more clearly written in its buildings than is that of any other city in Europe. There we see how that amazing Norman dynasty by sheer political genius became the real national House of Sicily; and at what a cost. We may discern there how it was able during more than a century to contrive the most refined, the most charming and the most original civilization which had existed in Europe since the failure of the Western Empire; and we find there too in those strange Arab buildings so lavishly decorated by the art of Byzantium, in which, so often, scarcely anything Norman appears at all, the price and the cost of it all, the almost complete suppression or at least the transformation of the soul and the art of the conqueror, that soul and that art which elsewhere proved so dominant, in England for instance where in spite of the notoriously stubborn national character and long tradition, within two generations of the Conquest, the whole country was covered with vast and essentially Norman buildings, in which not a trace of the art of the conquered can be discerned.

No doubt in the midst of a civilization so much superior to their own, their genius was to use and conserve it; but there is this too: it was probably as much by taste as by policy that the conquerors lost themselves in the civilization, the learning and the art, that they found in Sicily. Roger I certainly and the two Williams lived like veritable Eastern princes. Surrounded by Greek and Arab dignitaries of the palace, their whole administration and bureaucracy using indifferently Arabic, Greek or Latin, their money imitated from the coins of Byzantium and

bearing Arabic inscriptions, their army consisting of 10,000 Mussulmans, their fleet full of Syrians and commanded by Greeks, little by little they were overwhelmed by it all.

And then in this conquest of the conquerors no doubt the exquisite climate had its part. Those Norman kings dressed like orientals, their guards were negroes or Arabs, their chamberlains, their pages, their cooks, Saracens, eunuchs guarded their harems where Greek and Arab women wove the lovely silks through the interminable hours: the very names of their villas, their castles of indolence or of pleasure, amid eastern gardens of delight, bore oriental names—*Sweet Waters* or *Paradise of Earth* or *The Glory*. Palermo came soon to equal the splendour of Cordoba or Granada.

What had that stark and immovable Norman architecture, what we see still at Jumièges for instance or at Durham, to do with all this? Here and there indeed a church was built such as they knew at home, at Monreale and even more definitely characteristic at Cefalù, but they were only built to be overwhelmed by Saracen carvings and Byzantine mosaics, to be in fact completely orientalisted, till, save for their indestructible outline, they are unrecognizable, caught as they are in that oriental enchantment, and transformed out of all recognition. They might indeed be symbols of their Norman builders who sat enthroned arrayed in oriental vestments adorned with rude jewels bearing Cuphic inscriptions, no longer mere kings but priests, like the sacerdotal monarchs of the East, and at last scarcely European.

I suppose the only strictly Saracen building left in Palermo is the base of the great tower of the Cathedral which forms part of the Archbishop's Palace; this is said to date from Arabic times. But the Cathedral itself built by Walter "of the Mill," the English Archbishop, for William the Good in 1170, is, in spite of its continuous restorations belonging to every century since its foundation, an excellent example of the overwhelming influence of Saracen civilization and art after the Norman conquest.

The lovely building in golden stone with its four towers as graceful as the Giralda of Seville, has to-day half lost

CATHEDRAL, PALERMO

its unique character, by reason of the dome which Fuga built over it in the eighteenth century, when he ruined the interior with plaster in a vain attempt to make of it a Spanish church. But note that lovely south porch; it is purely Arab in feeling, note the fretwork and carving everywhere, the beautiful arcading: this is no Norman building, no Spanish church, but the creation of the same mind which built the mosque of Cordova, the same hands which contrived the beauty of the Alhambra and the strange ambiguous churches of Toledo. To find the Norman you must go into the crypt where among others the English Archbishop under whom the church was built, Gualterio "Offamilla" they call him, lies.[1] You will not find it in the chapel of the Kings in the south aisle of the great church, where in sumptuous porphyry such as neither the Dukes of Normandy nor the Kings of England ever knew, lie under their canopies, King Roger I, his daughter Constance,

[1] Gualterio Offamilla—Walter "of the Mill," Archbishop of Palermo, primate and chancellor of Sicily, was sent to Sicily as tutor for William the Good when a boy by Henry II of England. Henry expected to marry his daughter Johanna to William. Walter became Archbishop and was succeeded as tutor by Peter of Blois. But Walter was first Archdeacon of Cefalù and Dean of Girgenti. His appointment to the See of Palermo was violently opposed by the French, headed by the Queen Mother and Matthew the Vice-Chancellor, but was most favourably received by the Pope, Alexander III. Matthew's party finally succeeded in carving the Archbishopric of Monreale out of the diocese of Palermo in 1188. Walter held the See of Palermo for twenty-five years (1168–93). He is buried in the crypt, his sarcophagus bearing the following inscription:

CONDIDIT ACTORIS DOMVS HEC SVB MARMORE CORPVS
NE SIT GVALTERIO FVNDITVS ORBA SVO.
HIC JACET ANTISTES GVALTERIVS AVCTOR OVILIS
XRISTE, TVI FACTVS QUOD FVIT ANTE LINIS.
VIRGINIS EXEMPLO MAIOREM TVMBVLA TEMPLO
CLAVDIT, GVALTERII DVM FOVET OSSA PII
SVNT DVO LVSTRA MINVS ANNIS DE MILLE DVCENTIS
CVM CLAVDIT TANTVM TAM BREVIS ARCA VIRVM.

The name Walter "of the Mill"—Offamilla—is said to be a barbarous transformation of Gualterius *à φαμιλιάρις—proto familiaris* that is; the à signifying his position as the first among the *familiares* of the Norman King.

Henry VI her husband and the Emperor Frederic II—Stupor Mundi. When in the eighteenth century those sarcophagi were opened they found the body of Frederick whole and entire, arrayed in gorgeous robes covered with inscriptions in Arabic, and beside him lay the crown, the orb, and that disastrous sword.

What else is to be seen in the church is of little interest: in the chapel to the left of that of the Kings a picture of S. Barbara with an angel by some North Italian master; in the second chapel of the north aisle an Assumption by Antonio Gagini, other parts of which are scattered about the church; in the seventh chapel a statue of the Madonna by Francesco Laurana; in the eighth chapel reliefs of the Passion by Gagini. The choir stalls are of fine carved work and here are statues of the apostles by Gagini. To the right of the choir is the chapel of S. Rosalia, the patron saint of Palermo. Her relics lie here in a sarcophagus of silver. In the sacristy you may see the Cap of Constance of Aragon, wife of Frederick II and a piece of the mantle of Henry VI, taken from the great tomb in the Chapel of the Kings.

It is in the Cappella Palatina, the chapel of the Palace of the Norman kings, that one is first of all, and most overwhelmingly, confronted with the truth about Palermo, the victory of its own civilization over its northern conquerors. The Palace stands on a hill which has no doubt always been the site of the castle, much of that we see to-day dating from Saracen times. But it has been so added to and restored not only by the Normans, whose only relic there might seem to be the central tower, Torre Pisana or S. Ninfa, that it is no longer of much interest. It is in the Chapel built in 1132 by Roger and dedicated in honour of S. Peter that our interest lies.

The Cappella Palatina consists of a vestibule, a nave with aisles, sanctuary and apse: but that vestibule now spoiled was once part of a portico which surrounded the whole chapel. We may still find seven of those many columns and to the left an inscription, in Greek, in Arabic and in Latin, regarding the erection, it is said, of a clock in 1142.

The nave, which is but 100 feet in length and 42 feet wide, is upheld by wonderful Saracen pointed arches borne by ten columns of cipollino and granite 16 feet high; it is covered by a beautiful stalactite Saracen vault of wood wonderfully carved and adorned with Cuphic inscriptions. The loftier sanctuary is reached by five steps beneath a dome having eight narrow windows and inscriptions in Greek and Latin. To the right is a tall ambone of marble, and a marble Paschal candelabrum. And every inch of the walls and the floor are covered with mosaics. Those which encrust the walls of nave and aisles and sanctuary and the cupola itself consist of glass cubes: the ground is all of gold and upon this as it were in an amazing radiance and oriental splendour in innumerable colours one sees pictures, subjects from the Old and New Testaments. The oldest are those of the choir, but all have been damaged by many successive repairs and those of the vestibule and the apse are modern. The whole effect is incomparably rich and gorgeous: the dimness of the light so sparingly admitted through the tiny windows aiding wonderfully, so that the whole chapel glows like a jewelled casket or a Limoges enamel. While these mosaics are, now certainly, inferior to those at Cefalù, the whole chapel is one of the loveliest and most fascinating works of art left in the world. And one visits it again and again, not indeed to study its details, but to enjoy its general effect, to lose oneself in that Arabian sanctuary, that coffer of carved marble encrusted with gold and precious stones.

In the Sacristy which is reached through a bronze door of this time, are documents in Greek and Arabic and Latin; and in a room to the left, which has a fine door of wrought iron, is the Treasury where one finds among other things an ivory casket of Saracen work.

Before leaving the Palace, the Stanza di Ruggero, its walls also encrusted with mosaics, is worth some trouble to see, and the view from the flat roof of the tower, S. Ninfa, embraces the whole city and environs.

From that magical Arabian sanctuary in the construction of which the Greek and the Saracen combined in the service of the Norman, whose character and art are altogether absent

from it, one passes down to find a building not less astonishing, not less exotic, in the church—church or mosque is it ?—of S. Giovanni degli Eremiti. Here indeed one is in Arabia itself. Though built for the Norman kings as a church in 1132, it is in fact a mosque, a rectangular building in the shape of a tau-cross with three apses under five domes with its minaret and pointed arab windows. Nothing in Africa is more characteristic of the architecture of the Mussulman. Look at it from the delicious garden of the cloister. Those rose-coloured domes rising directly from the walls or from square substructures, that minaret crowned by its dome too, give one an ineffaceable impression of the orient and of Islam. No doubt Mass has been said here for centuries, but even that great Rite was not able to change the atmosphere of this building which belonged to Islam as it were by birth, in spite of the intention of those who created it. That small mosque which once stood upon this site and the remains of which you may still see, seems in it to live again. Here in this Islamic sanctuary were laid they say the nobles of the Norman court. Beside it opens the cloister, a garden of love overwhelmed with flowers, a fountain in the midst; still one of the loveliest things in Palermo.

Close by is the Porto Mazzara, said to be the oldest gate now remaining in Palermo. Its narrow and lofty Saracen arch opens in the mediæval wall. I am glad not to have missed it.

Half bemused by these wonders, so strangely beautiful, one passes through the streets so silent and anon so thronged, to San Cataldo and La Martorana.

In S. Cataldo one finds again what looks like a pure Saracen building, a rectangular mosque with apse and pointed Arabian windows under three domes, the central one supported by four ancient columns. They show you the altar there, but it cannot convince you that this was ever a Christian building. Yet in it certainly the Byzantine had his part for it was once covered with mosaics of which those of the pavement alone remain. It is said to date from 1161. It looks earlier.

On the same platform as S. Cataldo stands the church

PULPIT, CAPPELLA PALATINA, PALERMO

S. GIOVANNI DEGLI EREMITI, PALERMO

of La Martorana, its many columned tower with its pointed windows the most Arabian thing about it, grouping well with the domes of S. Cataldo. Its original title was S. Maria dell' Ammiraglio, for it was founded by that Byzantine admiral, Georgios Antiochenos, grand-admiral of King Roger in 1143.

Here we seem to have come out of Arabia but still to remain in the orient. It is a Byzantine building without a thought of the Norman. It was originally square with three apses under a dome, but the nuns of the convent close by were given the church in the fifteenth century and they prolonged it westward. Again, in the seventeenth century, the central apse was pulled down and a square chapel took its place and in the eighteenth century the dome was removed.

The whole interior was once covered with mosaics and those which remain, in spite of repairs and restorations, are to my mind far the finest in Palermo and fully equal to those at Cefalù. The mosaics of the Birth of Christ, of the Birth of the Virgin and of her Death are quite without rivals in the Cappella Palatina or of course at Monreale. Here too is a valuable mosaic of the Coronation by Christ Himself of King Roger I. When all was perfect this Church must have been in its total effect as wonderful as the Palatine Chapel. In the vestibule are two columns bearing Arabic inscriptions together with two mosaics of King Roger and the admiral founder which come it is said from the original facade.

These are the greatest and most interesting churches in Palermo, and to them should be added the Cathedral of Monreale.

This great church, the seat of an archbishop, stands on the hills behind Palermo about three miles from the city. Nothing is left of the great Benedictine Monastery founded in 1174 by William the Good, except the famous cloisters, but the great church remains and around it has grown a town of 23,000 inhabitants.

Of all the greater churches built in Palermo and its immediate neighbourhood for the Normans, this alone has much of their character. It is built in the form of a Latin cross with three apses 334 feet long and 131 feet wide. One might

almost from without take it for a Norman building. The beautiful eastern apses with their dark arcading are as striking here as they are at Cefalù, and the whole vast church with its two square towers at the western end stands up grey and dominating like a northern cathedral, but over a landscape charged with marvels and in its gorgeous colouring unlike anything to be found in the north. The noble bronze doors too in their magnificent Norman portal though not Norman are definitely Latin and European. They are the work of Bonanno of Pisa who made the splendid bronze doors in the transept of the Duomo in his native city. They were erected in 1186. The bronze doors at the side are less fine but date from about the same time. They are the work of Barisano of Trani.

Within all is different. Here we are in a vast Latin church it is true, but every yard of its 70,000 square feet is covered with Byzantine mosaics completed in 1182. In the nave, subjects from the Old Testament : in the aisles and transepts scenes from the Life of Christ. On the arches of the transept are scenes from the lives of SS. Peter and Paul, while in the Tribune we see the vast bust of Christ with an inscription in Greek and below the Madonna and Child enthroned with angels and saints and below again the Apostles. The spaces over the arch dividing the sanctuary from the minor tribune are adorned with figures of twelve prophets. An arch leading from the minor tribune into the transept is decorated with a half figure of Christ and eight medallions of prophets. On the other face of the arch is the Annunciation. In the archivaults in the centre of the church we see medallions of the progenitors of Christ. And over the arch dividing this vault from the nave is S. Sofia the Divine Wisdom of God, adored by the archangels S. Michael and S. Gabriel. Over the Royal Throne we see a curious and valuable scene : King William the founder receiving his crown directly from Christ without human intervention ; above the archiepiscopal Throne opposite, King William again presenting this church to the Blessed Virgin. In the right transept are the tombs of William the Bad and William the Good, the former a sarcophagus of porphyry like those in the Cathedral of Palermo.

These mosaics, almost overwhelming in their extent, are the poorest in Sicily, far below those at the Martorana and Cefalù and even less fine than those in the Cappella Palatina. They were intended to illustrate those portions of the Old Testament which prefigure the coming of the Messiah ; therefore they cease with the wrestling of Jacob. And further they represent the Life of Christ, the glory of the Redeemer and the triumph of the Church. The vast bust of the Saviour is inferior in type and form to that at Cefalù, far coarser in character and more wooden, nor are the harmonies of colour near so fine. These mosaics mark the decline of the art in Sicily. Note for instance the Crucifixion here in the Transept and compare it with the work of the older mosaicists.

Wandering out of the church one comes into the marvellously lovely Cloister built by William for the monks he brought hither from La Cava to serve this church. These Cloisters are all that is left of the original building and they are the largest and I suppose the finest of their kind in existence, incredibly romantic too in the ruined beauty of their pointed arches and half destroyed mosaics, their Arabian fountain, their wonderfully ornamented shafts and capitals. They date from about 1200. A ruined wall of the monastery overshadows them upon the south.

Beyond lies the delightful garden commanding a famous view over the Conca d'Oro and the city of Palermo and the sea. Here, as I at least never can do in the church itself, one may rest awhile and try to imagine what effect such a landscape as this must have had upon Count Roger after all his fighting and all his wars, what effect such a climate as this must have had upon the young Norman from Coutances, the harsh Norman fields, that Norman home. It must have seemed like fairyland : something too good to be true, a vision at noontide, a dream in the night, something to which one could only surrender, only submit with secret delight.

Is it there the explanation lies of all this strange business : so that in all this city of the Norman kings you look in vain for anything that is really their own ?

And so I found myself caught by the glamour of this

Arabian fairyland. I too altogether succumbed to its fascination, its curiously exotic charm. And I spent day after day peering about Palermo to find even a fragment of it hidden in a church, which, now of the fourteenth or the seventeenth century, kept just one thing of that strange time—part of a cloister here, a doorway there, a window or an inscription.

It was little enough I found.

In the Piazza Marina I came to the Palazzo Chiaramonte which was rebuilt, preserving much of an earlier building, in the early years of the fourteenth century, by the Chiaramonte family. It is said to stand upon the site of a palace of the Saracen Emirs and I suppose those wonderful Arabian windows must date from that time or at any rate from the Norman dynasty: they are worth any trouble to see. The roof too of the great wall should be noted; it is a fine thing painted by Simone da Corleone and Cecco di Nano at the end of the fourteenth century, but still with much of Saracenic inspiration about it.

Then the little church close by, of S. Antonio Abbate, though ruinous is certainly of the Norman time, when nearly all that was built seems to have been the work of the Saracen builders.

Not far away towards the station is the desolate Piazza Magione on which stands the church of La Magione built in 1161 for the Cistercians and given in 1193 by Henry VI to the knights of the Teutonic Order. It has been hopelessly restored it is true, but the charming little Arabic cloister remains, that I was glad not to have overlooked.

In the Piazza della Vittoria between the Palazzo Reale and the Duomo, is the ruined Norman church of La Maddalena, and in the Via dell' Incoronata behind the Cathedral is the ruined church of the Incoronata where King Roger was crowned.

Nor must I forget the Casa Normanna in the Salita S. Antonio, close to the Quattro Canti behind S. Matteo in the Corso, for it has the most lovely Arabic windows, as fine as anything of the kind in the city.

And it is remarkable: even when the Saracens were all gone and the Norman kings dead or exiled something of

THE CLOISTER AT MONREALE

BRONZE DOORS BY BONANNO, MONREALE

this strange spirit lingers still in the work of their successors. Look at the fourteenth-century churches of S. Agostino in Via S. Agostino and of S. Francesco near the Giardino Garibaldi. They are of the fourteenth century and their rose windows and portals are I presume of that time, yet how much they still suggest the Saracen, almost like a melody which the mind cannot quite forget or quite recall.

But once or twice in Palermo the Norman stands forth free of the spell of his Arabian dream ; and not only in the crypt of the Cathedral. It might seem as though Walter "of the Mill," Archbishop of Palermo and Chancellor of the kingdom, was not subject to the Saracen enchantment, that in all this dazzling sunlight he remembered the grey towers of Normandy and England and could not forget them or forego them even here, amid the minarets and domes, the curiously wrought roofs, the art and cunning of the east.

He was Archbishop from 1168 to 1193. How much he had to do with the crypt of his Cathedral, where he lies, I know not, but he certainly built, and in the real Norman English way, the church of Santo Spirito, famous as the church of *I Vespri* the Sicilian Vespers, when at vespers on Easter Monday 1282 all the French were massacred.

The Archbishop founded here a Cistercian monastery in 1173 and as you enter the church to-day it is as though suddenly you had returned home : in its stark strength and gaunt nobility, its massive round stone pillars naked of ornament, its pointed arches (there alone perhaps we may find the Saracen influence) it is one of the most moving sanctuaries in Palermo and bears witness to the character of the great man who determined to build it.

It was Walter "of the Mill" again who built about the same time (1174) the pure Norman church of S. Cristina la Vetera close to the Incoronata behind the Cathedral. Certainly, whatever may have befallen the Norman kings, this man was immovably true to the North, and, like so many of us his countrymen, preferred above all foreign things even in a foreign place the things of home.

The other churches of Palermo have a different and for me certainly a lesser interest.

There is S. Domenico, for instance, a great church capable of holding many thousands of people. It was built in the seventeenth century and many famous Sicilians are buried there : it is I suppose to Palermo what S. Croce is to Florence. The most interesting thing in the church, however, is a relief of the Madonna and Child by Antonio Gagini.

In the Via Bambinai behind this church is the Oratorio del SS. Rosario. Here is an altar-piece by Van Dyck—the Madonna del Rosario and some wonderful baroque decorations in stucco by Serpotta who was famous for this work.

You find his work again in the Oratorio di S. Zita close by in the Via Valverde where the seats are inlaid with mother-of pearl. In the church of S. Zita dating from the fourteenth century you find the best work of Antonio Gagini, a triple relief, of the Birth, Death and Assumption of the Blessed Virgin.

But much more delightful than any of these dull and overloaded buildings, is the church of S. Maria della Catena at the very end of the Corso towards the sea by the Porta Felice. This is a charming late Renaissance building with a lovely portico from which you may get a glimpse both of the Cala and of the sea. Its name comes to it from the chain with which the old harbour was closed. S. Maria Nuova behind the old harbour has a similar vestibule.

I say nothing of the Convento de' Cappuccini and its gruesome corridors lined with the mummified bodies of the wealthy inhabitants of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Palermo in their best clothes, for I have never seen it. Those who have, have told me it is a melancholy but not uninteresting spectacle. It is certainly a spectacle which all strangers who come to Palermo seem to wish to see.

It somehow did not attract me. I preferred to lounge about those labyrinthine streets in the heart of the city looking for a bit of Sicilian Gothic, as in the portal of the SS. Annunziata which charmed me as did its early Renaissance interior. I liked better to come by chance upon a beautiful thing like the lovely Renaissance church of S.

Agata behind the Cathedral in the Via dell' Incoronata, or the graceful facade, also of the Renaissance, of S. Chiara by the Piazza Bologni or to wander into S. Giorgio of the Genoese, lovelier than S. Agata; or to admire at the gorgeous baroque of S. Caterina by the Municipio.

III

Modern Palermo, however, has its amusing sides.

"So you do not believe in the Evil Eye?" said my friend.

I did not answer, if for no other reason but that I was out of breath. Two minutes before we had been sitting at a little table in the Piazza drinking vermouth and seltzer, like a couple of hundred other people one warm evening, and then suddenly every table was empty, every one sauntered away, and my friend, seizing my arm, insisted on my going too, just as I was about to pay for our refreshment. In an alley-way, well out of sight of the Piazza, he explained the very reasonable cause of every one's action.

It seems that a moment before every one moved away, leaving their drinks unfinished and their ices uneaten, a certain signore—notoriously in possession of the Evil Eye—had sauntered up to a table and sat down. That was why the Piazza and caffe and all the little tables had emptied themselves.

"And even so he *may* have looked at us!"

I laughed.

"So," said my friend, "you do not believe in the Evil Eye."

No. I didn't think I did. I was quite sure I didn't. We hadn't got it in England. In Scotland maybe. But within the realm of the Church of England . . . no, it was unheard of. Certainly I did not believe in it. Besides, I hadn't finished my vermouth.

My friend was somewhat scornful.

"The Church of England, *caro amico*! Why, Pope Pius IX himself had it?"

"Had what?"

"Malocchio."

"Nonsense! What are you telling me?"

"I tell you, whenever Pio Nono held a Consistory, all the Cardinals made the horns under their robes."

"The horns?"

"*Caro amico*, there are three ways of warding off the Evil Eye. One is to close the middle and third fingers of the hand with the thumb, and to point the first and little fingers at the Person. Better is the second way, when, instead of pointing at the Person, you touch iron with the two outstretched fingers—for instance, your keys in your pocket. The third way, and the most efficacious . . . I will tell you another time."

"Giovanni, it is a game for children."

"For children? Am I a child? *Caro amico*, am I not a great artist—am I not one of the great pianists of our time?" (He is.) "Well, I tell you it is no game for children. It is not a game at all. Listen to me." He seized my coat lapels and thrust his face into mine. Giovanni is very eager and what we used to call in England, "intense."

"Listen to me. You remember when, last year, you saw me off to Italy—at Victoria, was it not? Well, at Bologna I saw *that Person*. I got out of the train there on the way to Florence to get a sandwich, and by ill-luck there he was. I did all I could to avoid him, but he managed to speak to me. I knew then something would happen."

"What folly!"

"*Caro*, I knew. And I was right. No sooner had the train got into those accursed tunnels on the Apennine than the engine broke down, and we were there *for four hours*! FOUR HOURS!! Stifling with smoke, gasping for air, our handkerchiefs before our mouths, our noses, our eyes. In that heat! *Dio mio*, half dead!"

"Well, that might happen any day. It had nothing to do with . . ."

"Don't say his name. Not to do with him? *Caro amico*, on the next day I gave my great concert in Florence.

The huge hall was packed ; it was a real triumph. Just as I sat down at the piano I looked over the great hall full of people, a sea of faces, and there, coming in at the door, I saw *that Person.*"

"Well ? "

"I began to play. I had not played six notes when . . . Crash ! Crash ! Down came the great chandelier in the middle of the hall. My concert was over, and the *Misericordia* busy."

"Well, well ; what a misfortune ! "

"Yes. We had to return all the money, except the subscriptions."

"Ah ! Well, let me go and pay for our vermouth."

"No, don't go. If you must pay, send a small boy. *Ecco ! Ragazzo, ragazzo.*"

"What a shame ! Well, as I don't believe in the Evil Eye, I don't mind sending him. Wait a minute . . . "

I felt in *all* my pockets, but the purse was gone. I must have left it on the little table in the Piazza when we left so hurriedly. Yes, I remembered, just as I was going to pay.

"What is it ? "

"Why, you will have to pay after all. I've lost my purse."

"What's that ? "

"I have lost my purse."

"You have lost your purse ? "

"Yes."

"You . . . have . . . lost . . . your . . . purse ? "

"I tell you so."

"Thank God."

"What do you mean ? "

"It was you he looked at, then, not me."

"Who ? "

"That Person."

"What nonsense ! . . . "

"Ha ! I forget ; of course, *you* don't believe in the Evil Eye."

IV

One of the most Sicilian things in Palermo is the Museum established in the convent of the Chiesa dell' Olivella. There you will find in a marvellous confusion, due to the unsuitable building, an extraordinary collection of beautiful and banal objects, of important and trifling things, the whole story of Sicily in this débris from temple and tomb, from church and mosque, from the Greek, Roman, Saracen, Norman and Spanish civilizations which have, with how many others, succeeded one another on this island of the three seas.

I found myself continually returning to those littered cloisters, those curiously sober rooms at the end of dark corridors, at the top of winding staircases, perhaps because this was the quietest place in the city, perhaps because one never knew what one would come upon in so confused a place.

Happily the more important Greek objects are for the most part exceedingly well shown in two rooms called the Sala di Imera and the Sala di Selinunte; the less important things being distributed in the cloisters where it is pleasant to spend the hot afternoons searching them out.

In the Sala di Imera are displayed not only those objects which have come from Himera or Thermæ, but it seems the later finds which are as yet not officially described.

The major objects in this room, however, are three great Lion masks or heads of limestone from a Doric Temple at Himera. They are of the fifth century B.C. and exceedingly fine, splendid in design and most vigorous in execution. They came no doubt from the cornice where they fulfilled the purpose of the gargoyles of a Gothic church.

I passed by the great herma of Dionysos, though its grave majestic aspect gives it some nobility, for it seems to me a Hellenistic work, a copy of some original of the school of Praxitiles: nor did the Roman works displayed here interest me. But how can I tell my delight in that archaic relief of a man and a woman dancing, and in another similar relief there, whose subject I could not

divine, or in that lovely full length figure of a nude—Aphrodite perhaps,—that is numbered 716, but which I could not find in the Catalogue, nor even obtain a photograph of it.

From this room one passes directly into the Sala di Selinunte. The walls here are all lined with the Metopes from the Temples C, E and F of Selinus. The oldest of these Temples was Temple C on the acropolis, of which the vast ruins remain, though overthrown, to so large an extent intact. It dates from the early part of the sixth century B.C. It was our countrymen Harris and Angell who in 1822 discovered three of the metopes of this temple now admirably arranged in this room between what I suppose are the original triglyphs under a modern copy of a portion of the massive entablature. The first represents a Quadriga with a charioteer and what appears to be two Victories with garlands. It has been suggested that this may represent Oenomaus.[1] The second represents Perseus beheading the Gorgon Medusa ; and behind the hero Athena stands. The third represents Herakles with the Cercopes, those thievish and horrible gnomes —monkeys maybe—who robbed him while he slept.

These metopes are very primitive and are apparently adapted from bronze reliefs. It is curious that the first should be technically so different from the other two ; for while they are carved in low relief, the first has much greater depth, the foreparts of the horses being completely in the round, and the effect of the foreshortening is almost successful. This metope seems also to be more skilfully

[1] Oenomaus was King of Pisa in Elis. It had been declared to him by an oracle that he should die when his daughter Hippodameia should marry. In consequence he made it a condition that those who would be her suitors should contend with himself in the chariot race : he who conquered him should receive her, but those that he should conquer should suffer death. The race-course was from Pisa to the altar of Poseidon on the Isthmus of Corinth—right across the Peloponnesus. All went as he wished till Pelops, son of Tantalus, came to Pisa. He, driving the horses he had received from Poseidon, reached the goal before Oenomaus, for, as some say, he had bribed the charioteer Myrtillus to remove the pegs from the wheels of the king's chariot. Oenomaus killed himself after cursing Pelops and all his race. One of the pediments of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia is devoted to him.

carved than the other two ; but it must be remembered that all was once covered with brilliant colours, remains of which may still be seen on the Perseus.

Another set of three metopes also of the sixth century is preserved here. These were discovered by Professor Salinas in 1892. They seem to be the work of a different school from the foregoing, and the subjects are certainly derived from Crete. Here we see Europa riding on the Bull across the sea ; Herakles and the Cretan Bull ; and a Sphinx. The Europa is exquisite in delicacy and charm. It might seem certain that we have here the achievement of a much more learned and an older tradition of art than in the metopes from Temples C and F ; but these also were once covered with stucco and painted with colours.

Close by are the lower parts of two metopes from Temple F—one of the temples on the eastern hill of Selinus. These are somewhat later than the foregoing but still belong to the sixth century. They represent a contest between Gods and giants.

Upon the wall at the end of the room four metopes have been arranged of a later time. They come from Temple E on the eastern hill at Selinus, and date from the middle of the fifth century B.C. They represent the marriage of Zeus and Hera, the Punishment of Actæon by Artemis, Herakles slaying Hippolyte and Athena slaying the giant Enceladus. Their exquisite refinement verges on weakness, they have nothing of the vigour or even of the great decorative quality of the earlier metopes, and a disagreeable peculiarity is that the faces, the hands and feet of the female figures are inserted in white marble. Of course these works too were coloured, so that the contrast between the cold white marble and the coarse warm stone, which is so distressing to-day, was not found when they were in their original state.

Other Greek works the museum possesses, among them a collection of vases from Gela and Selinus, but nothing comparable with these sculptures from Selinus and Himera.

That magnificent series of Greek works of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. is by far the most important possession

of the Museum. In comparison with these the rest of the objects is only a collection of curiosities.

Among these curiosities, and not the least lovely, are the fragments of Saracenic art preserved in the Sala Araba on the first floor. Here are many wood-carvings, fragments of ceilings in the honeycomb style, a white and gold terra-cotta vase from Mazzara, an astrolabe of 955 and many Cuphic inscriptions.

The second floor is devoted to the extensive picture gallery in which not a single work of the Sicilian school of the first importance is to be found. Its great treasure is the small triptych of the early Flemish school, probably by Mabuse in the Gabinetto Malvagna.

Among the Italian pictures it is interesting to note two works by Pisan masters of the fourteenth century, one a charming panel of the Madonna and Child on a gold ground by Giovanni di Niccolò, the other a signed work, a large altar-piece of the Madonna and Child enthroned between saints and angels by Turino Vanni the second. Here too is the only signed work by Bartolommeo da Camogli, a Madonna of Humility with a curious predella from the church of S. Francesco.

Of the Sicilian school we find a fine fourteenth-century altar-piece of the Coronation of the Virgin with saints and beneath a predella, attributed to the Pisan school (No. 75) and another triptych (No. 82) perhaps by the same hand also representing the Coronation of the Virgin.

The best pictures in Palermo are not, however, to be found here, but must be sought in the Chiaramonte collection where there is a fine picture of the Madonna and Child of the school of Giotto, two fine panels of S. Peter and S. Paul by Lippo Memmi, a polyptych by Pietro Lorenzetti and a panel of S. Lucy by Taddeo di Bartolo.

V

. . . After all, the museum did not really interest me. I found myself continually wandering back into that

wonderful Arabian tale and seeking to forget the city of yesterday and to-day in La Martorana and S. Cataldo or S. Giovanni and its garden of love, or through a whole afternoon in watching the light change and fade upon the precious gold and mosaics of the Cappella Palatina.

And then there were those Villas or Palaces rather, pavilions of delight and beauty which the same Arabian and Byzantine genius built and contrived for the same Norman lords : La Zisa, La Cuba, La Cubola, La Favara and Menani.

All these are quite outside the city and were once surrounded, as some of them are still, by the loveliest gardens and parks in the world.

That nearest to the city is La Zisa, beyond the Porta Nuova. It was originally built for William I who gave it an Arabian name, as we should say " The Glory," El Aziz, which has been transformed by the Sicilians into La Zisa. It is sadly changed and desolate amid its neglected surroundings, and only a single exquisite stone pine remains of the garden which was the pride of Sicily, as the inscription there proclaims : As Europe is the glory of the world, Italy of Europe, Sicily of Italy, so this garden is the pride of Sicily. And yet in spite of everything the ghost of all that beauty still haunts this square keep of hewn stone with its curious rectangular tower, though that blind arcading in the two upper storeys about the palace has been broken by windows : windows which of old did not look thus without, but were only built to look within upon the inner court. And I wonder how old those battlements may be ?

Within, on the entrance floor, is a small open hall in the central recess of which a fountain runs forth in a channelled way across the pavement. There are three recesses and each is covered with a marvellous honeycomb design, similar to what you find in the Alhambra. And the walls are encrusted with Byzantine mosaics of huntsmen and peacocks with a lovely border of flowers.

That is all : only a hint really, only a gaunt ruin left to remind us of all that Leandro Alberti found here so short a time ago as the sixteenth century : little more than a

ruin at any rate. And those gardens? Why the road passes over their dead beauty that is now dust. Only that single stone pine remains to remind us of what once they were.

It is again out of Porta Nuova you go to find another of these Arabian Palaces: La Cuba, which alas is certainly in no better case than La Zisa, for this pavilion where Gianni di Procida in the *Decameron* found his lost lady is now a barrack. It was built for William II in 1182. An oblong rectangular building like La Zisa surrounded by a blind arcading of pointed panels, embattled above with a parapet bearing a Cuphic inscription, its small court within has a single recess covered with the lovely Arabian honeycomb decoration. Yet here something, though not much of the gardens remains, but the park and fishponds are gone and the road passes right across the pleasance where Boccaccio's lovers were caught asleep naked in each others arms.[1]

And indeed you must cross the road now to find the loveliest of all these Arabian buildings, La Cubola, a pavilion which of old stood in the gardens of La Cuba, but now is separated from them. Imagine four pointed arches opening in a great square low tower of stone which supports a small cupola: each of those arches gives you a vista of dusky orange grove or palm alley or green lemon walk, and La Cubola itself is still complete and perfect: the most charming of all the Arab buildings in Sicily. Yet something you feel is lacking: the fountain which used to play, but no longer, beneath the cupola, its music echoing in the deep shade through the silent garden groves.

Outside Porta Garibaldi you soon come upon the great bridge of so many arches built by the Admiral Georgios Antiochenos, who was later to build La Martorana in honour of the Blessed Virgin. This is still an Arabo-Byzantine creation and is worth some trouble to see; while only a little farther on the highway stands another Arabo-Byzantine building, the church of S. Giovanni dei Lebbrosi, built in 1071 for Robert Guiscard. The church

[1] *Decameron*, *v*, 6.

stands it is said on the site where the Normans camped when Palermo was taken at last. It has been much restored but the original walls and the cupola remain at any rate from the Norman times.

Turning here to the right and taking the road for Brancaccio, in little more than a mile one comes beyond that village to another of those Arabian pleasances, that named Sweet Waters, La Favara, the Castello di Mar Dolce. It seems to have been built about 1153 and was perhaps the most splendid of all those pavilions in which the Norman kings delighted, being indeed a hunting pavilion built round a large open court. It was a favourite of Frederick II too and is praised and sung by many throughout the Middle Age. It stands on the first of the hills, the last spur seaward of Monte Grifone here thrust out, a great headland into the Conca d'Oro. It was it seems chiefly famous for its baths and fountains, fragments of which remain, together with its small chapel covered by a cupola. But its wonderful gardens and park have wholly disappeared and we have to go to the Arabian Abdurahman to learn of their beauty.

"*O how beautiful,*" he writes, "*how beautiful is the lakelet of the twin palm trees and the island where the spacious palace stands! The clear waters of the double springs are like liquid pearls and their basin is a sea; you might say that the boughs of the trees leaned down to look at the fishes in the pool and smile at them. The great fishes swim in those transparent waters and the birds sing their songs among the gardens. The ripe oranges of the island are like fire burning upon boughs of emerald; the pale lemon recalls a lover who has wept all night for the absent beloved. The two palms are like friends who have gained a retreat inaccessible to their enemies, or stand erect proudly to confound the murmurs and calumnies of those who envy them. O palms of the two lakelets of Palermo, may unceasing, undisturbed and plenteous dews ever refresh you!*"

Nothing of all this might seem to remain except the lemon groves.

A mile farther, or not so much, past the fossil cave, the Grotta dei Giganti, on the lovely mountain side stands

MOSAIC OF THE DEATH OF THE VIRGIN,
LA MARTORANA, PALERMO

CHIESA DEI VESPRI, PALERMO

the church of S. Maria di Gesù from which you may have perhaps the finest of the many fine views of Palermo, the Conca d'Oro and the sea. This charming old monastic church of the fourteenth century retains a few Sicilian doorways, a charming fountain and some good Renaissance tombs. The old cemetery was the burial-place of many of the nobles of Palermo.

And the last of those Arabian pavilions lies high up beyond Monreale, beyond San Martino on the Palermitan mountains, at the village of Altarello. It is called Mimnerno and is the Arab Menani. Though altogether ruinous as I was told, I could not forbear to visit it, for it was said to have been built for King Roger and there are none too many of these marvellous Saracen buildings to be found in the world. So I set out. At Altarello I found a small boy to show me the way, which he did with much courtesy, refusing all payment. I found the place ruinous indeed, but the chapel remains and part of the interior court and the views over Palermo alone make it worth a visit.

Moreover, it is easy to combine with it a visit to the Badia di S. Martino. This Monastery, now of course suppressed, was a Benedictine house founded by S. Gregory in the sixth century. The buildings we see, however, are all of the eighteenth century and are without much interest.

And so I came back to Palermo which, apart from such things as these, has, I find, little or nothing to say to me. And yet . . .

Among the most beautiful things in Palermo are the delicious gardens in which I think she is richer than any other city within the Italian kingdom. For the most part they are like all southern gardens, full of shade and regularly planned, really architectural in effect and for the most part just the outside courts and rooms of the villa, the chief luxury being not so much the often exquisite flowers and trees but the water-course, the pool or the fountain. There are many examples of this, among the most delightful being the garden of the Villa Tasca, which is like an exquisite forecourt to the house, and where

water is most admirably used not merely for its refreshment and its music, the pleasure it can give in itself, in this land of sunshine and summer heat, but as a mirror as it were for the garden, the beauty of that group of trees which is so delightfully reflected there, those cypresses about a little Temple which continually contemplate their own beauty in the lake.

The Villa Giulia, La Flora as they call it, the public garden, laid out in 1777 by Niccolò Palma, still has an air of the eighteenth century. It owes its name to Donna Giulia Guevara, the wife of the viceroy of that time, whose charming thought it seems to have been to make her city lovelier with this pleasance of blossoming trees, where to-day the people gather still to listen to music, as I suppose they did also when this garden was first designed with its alley-ways of laurels and its fountain of Trinacria.

Close by is the Botanical Garden, also of the eighteenth century, with its great tropical trees, its palms, its yuccas, its bamboos, its huge baobabs with their great branches and arms sending vast roots into the ground, for all the world like fantastic temples from China or Japan.

And then among the loveliest of these gardens of Palermo with their shade and refreshment, are certainly two which I should have been unfortunate to miss, the garden of the Villa Trabia and the garden of the Villa Sperlinga. The latter has I think the oldest and the most beautiful olives in all western Sicily, half as old as history I suppose ; and then there is that garden within a garden, a garden enclosed which for its marvellous colour I have never seen equalled anywhere in the world. The walls are encrusted with the bright glowing many-coloured tiles of Caltagirone and even of Persia, old oil jars, such as Greece knew, old vases of majolica such as the Phœnicians spread on the beaches of the Mediterranean to attract such a princess as the little white Io daughter of Inachus, are filled with all manner of geraniums and calceolarias, and everywhere in a blaze of colour are set all the brightest flowers imaginable. It is like some marvellous dream of the Renaissance come true, a miracle that could perhaps only have been conceived here, only have come to such brilliant perfection

in this privileged place and in a land so learned yet so light ; light enough for enchantment.

Nor are these few by any means all the gardens that are the delight of this city which without them would be lacking in something which it could ill spare—a certain beautiful quietness and refinement, a sense of privacy which more than all other cities it seems to need. There are the gardens of Villa Belmonte above Villa Igeia, that hotel for the rich which never seems to belong to Palermo, but is like a yacht come to anchor in the harbour. There is La Favorita, that royal château built by Ferdinand IV in the Chinese style, with its gardens of cypresses and pines, its dusky thickets and shady walks ; there is Villa Scalea with its roses, there is Villa Sofia with its far lovelier garden and delightful Arabian garden-house.

All three lie under towering Monte Pellegrino, the great isolated headland of limestone which closes the bay of Palermo upon the west. This mountain, for it is nothing less, is nearly 2,000 feet high and so exceedingly steep that the path up is called La Scala. A road zigzags up the treeless eastern face, which you find is covered with broom and herbage though from below it appears to be quite bare. Under an overhanging rock close to the summit is the Grotto of S. Rosalia about which a church has been built, the Santuario, in 1625.

S. Rosalia is the omnipotent patron saint of Palermo, as S. Lucia is of Syracuse and S. Agatha of Catania, though she cannot claim the very great antiquity of these, nor a place in the Canon of the Mass. In fact doubts have been cast upon her existence at all! It was with some difficulty that I was able to learn anything of a definite and non-fabulous sort about her, though her name is on every lip, and she is famous throughout the island.

I find, however, that she was the niece of King William the Good, and having at an early age given symptoms of a distinct vocation for the religious life, at fifteen she retired from the world to a lonely hermitage on the Palermitan mountains at a place called Quesquina. In the year 1159 she disappeared and nothing more was heard of her for nearly five hundred years—nothing whatever. However,

during the plague of 1624, a " holy man " was vouchsafed a vision in which he was told that the " saint's " bones were lying in a cave near the top of Monte Pellegrino, and that if they were taken up with proper reverence and carried in procession thrice round the walls of the city the plague would immediately cease. At first it seems no one took any notice of the " holy man," but when he " grew noisy " he began to get adherents and presently the Archbishop Doria " was obliged " to send to Monte Pellegrino to satisfy the people. There they found the bones as he had told them, the city was freed from the plague and S. Rosalia became the patron of Palermo. It is further related that now an inscription from the hand of S. Rosalia herself was found in the cave. This told that she had been disturbed in her retreat and in order to be in solitude had wandered to Monte Pellegrino. Her festival is celebrated at the end of June and on September 4th.

More interesting than little S. Rosalia's cavern is the marvellous view from the summit of the rock, one of the finest in Sicily, giving you on a clear day even the Æolian Isles. There, one can well say farewell to Palermo, above the shrine of its saint, for there the whole city, the beautiful bay and the Conca d'Oro with its enclosing mountains lie beneath your eyes, and since not a building is more than two miles away they can all be noted one after another, the Royal Palace and Chapel, the Cathedral where lie the Norman kings, the Cupolas of S. Giovanni, of the Martorana, of San Cataldo, the great harbours crowded with shipping, the shores and gardens of the city. Indeed the whole world seen thence seems to be all a garden filled with groves of every kind, watered by fountains and rivulets winding through that golden shell, which as you see fulfils its name not only on account of its wealth, but of its shape and its situation lying there upon the seashore. And I understood from that height, the whole beneath my eyes, why the place was known of old as Panormus : for indeed it is still all harbour, and when, as then, the sea ran right up into the midst of the city, this must have been an even truer name than it is to-day.

It might seem indeed a place contrived by nature for

those old Phœnician traders who first established here some sort of settlement and were followed later by their Carthaginian brothers. Palermo was never Greek, from first to last there was nothing Greek about her. Here on Monte Pellegrino you may stand on the Carthaginian fort and look over the great bay to its eastern headland Monte Catalfano upon which lie the stones of Carthaginian Solunto, while in between rise the domes of the Saracen, the minarets of the Arab, the swarming life of a people that even to-day have more of the orient about them than any other in western Europe.

CHAPTER XIV

BAGHERIA, CEFALÙ AND THE NORTH COAST

HOWEVER you go along the north coast of Sicily, whether by train, or motor, or from town to town afoot, getting a lift now and again from some passing vehicle, you will be struck by the noble magnificence of those far stretched headlands, that steep and rocky shore with which in fact no other coast of the island can compare.

From Trapani, indeed all the way to Capo Peloro, the great rocky capes and headlands thrust out steeply and brokenly into the purple sea, forming an innumerable series of bays among the loveliest and most various in the world and often of the wildest beauty. Sometimes these bays open into great gulfs as at Castellamare, at Palermo, at Tindari, and at Milazzo ; more often of course you find smaller half secret inlets, but always and everywhere the grandeur of the coast, for half the way and more in sight of the floating islands of Æolus, overwhelms you and is certainly unmatched in the south and east of the island. The north coast of Sicily, historically the least interesting and important shore of the island, is by far the finest in natural grandeur and beauty.

On leaving Palermo for Messina one comes first, on that long, difficult and lovely road, to Bagheria, less than ten miles from the capital, and related to it much as Versailles is to Paris or Richmond to London. That is to say that here the nobility of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had their most splendid villas, some of which have been famous all over the world, as La Valguarnera and La Palagonia and La Butera.

Bagheria lies on the landward side of the great and beau-

tiful headland of Monte Catalfano which closes the gulf of Palermo on the east. It is sad to see these glorious villas, which when Brydone was in Sicily in the last quarter of the eighteenth century were so full of life and splendour, to-day half deserted and closed.

Villa Valguarnera is built on the highest part commanding wonderful views towards Himera, Cefalù and the Æolian isles on the one side, and the Conca d'Oro, Palermo and Monte Pellegrino on the other. It certainly stands in one of the finest situations in Europe, amid its great gardens.

Villa Palagonia was, however, more famous, not only because Goethe devoted so many pages to it, but for its own absurd and outrageous sake. Alas, it has fallen into decay and many of its more monstrous decorations have been removed to make room for others less amazing but quite as much out of place. Indeed no traveller but must feel sorry that the villa was ever tampered with. It was one of the most astonishing affairs in Europe and perhaps not so absurd as it is said to have been by a generation of travellers who seem to have missed its irony. Brydone saw it at its best but within a few years after it had already been partly dismantled. He describes the villa as like no other on earth, and says, it was built by the Prince of Palagonia, a man of immense fortune, who had devoted his whole life to the study of monsters and chimeras greater and more ridiculous than ever entered into the imagination of the wildest writers of romance or knight-errantry.

He omits to mention the beautiful cypress avenue that is one of the great delights of the place, but describes the amazing crowd of statues that surrounded the house and appeared, at a distance, like a little army drawn up for its defence.

" When you get amongst them, you imagine you have got into the regions of delusion and enchantment ; for of all of that immense group there is not one made to represent any one object in nature ; nor is the absurdity of the wretched imagination that created them less astonishing than its wonderful fertility. It would require a volume to describe

the whole . . . He has put the heads of men to the bodies of every sort of animal and the heads of every other animal to the bodies of men. Sometimes he makes a compound of five or six animals that have no sort of resemblance in nature. He puts the head of a lion on the neck of a goose, the body of a lizard, the legs of a goat, the tail of a fox. On the back of this monster he puts another if possible still more hideous, with five or six heads and a crest of horns, that beats the beast in the Revelation all to nothing. There is no kind of horn in the world that he has not collected, and his pleasure is to see them all flourishing on the same head. The scandalous chronicle says that his wife has assisted him in making this collection and that there are some of her placing as well as of his. His sincere wish is that she may bring forth a monster. It is truly unaccountable that he has not been shut up many years ago; but he is perfectly innocent and troubles nobody by the indulgence of his frenzy; on the contrary he gives bread to a vast number of statuaries and other workpeople whom he rewards in proportion as they bring their imaginations to coincide with his own . . . The statues which adorn the great avenue and surround the court of the palace amount already to 600 . . . The inside of this enchanted castle corresponds exactly with the out; it is in every respect as whimsical and fantastical, and you cannot turn yourself to any side, where you are not stared in the face by some hideous figure or other. The vast arched roofs are composed entirely of large mirrors, nicely joined together, so that when three or four people are walking below there is always the appearance of three or four hundred walking above. All the chimney-pieces, windows and sideboards are crowded with pyramids and pillars of tea-pots, caudle-cups, bowls, cups, saucers and so forth, strongly cemented together; some of these columns are not without beauty: one of them has a large china chamber-pot for its base and a circle of pretty little flower-pots for its capital: I dare say there is not less than forty pillars and pyramids formed in this strange fantastic manner. . . ."

It was of course generally believed that the Prince was

mad and Brydone certainly thinks so. He does not seem to have perceived the fierce irony of it all: that a man living in such a polity as that of this kingdom might well perceive that he was surrounded by monsters and so represent the world as consisting of such beasts. Even to-day—perhaps more than ever to-day—and not only in Sicily. . . .

Another fantastic villa is the Villa Butera, called the Certosa, because it is filled with curious historical figures in wax represented as monks: most hideous and cunning in aspect. Irony again. These people were rather furious than mad.

Upon the further side of Monte Catalfano on the rocks of Capo Zaffarano lie the extensive ruins of Soluntum in a magnificent situation over the sea looking across the vast and shallow Bay of Himera to the far stretched headland of Cefalù. This impregnable place upon the bold and lofty promontory was never a Greek settlement. It was, and most characteristically, Phœnician. As Thucydides says in his sixth book, the Phœnicians had settlements all round Sicily on the promontories along the sea-coast for the sake of trade with the Sikels: these they walled off. But when the Greeks also began to come in by sea in large numbers the Phœnicians left most of these places and settling together lived in Motya, Soluntum and Panormus, near the Elymi, partly because they trusted in their alliance with the Elymi and partly because from the north-west corner of Sicily the voyage to Carthage was shortest.

Soluntum soon came into the possession of the Carthaginians and was able to withstand Dionysius of Syracuse in 397 B.C., when he made his greatest and most successful attack upon the Carthaginian cities of Sicily. He ravaged its territory but could not take the city, which however was betrayed into his hands in the following year, according to Diodorus, who simply notes the fact but does not explain how this coup was brought about. It soon came again into the hands of Carthage, probably under the treaty of 383 B.C., when the Halycus was established as the permanent frontier between Greek and Carthaginian.

Later the place was given up for a moment to the mercenaries of Agathocles, and in the First Punic War, after the fall of Panormus, it opened its gates to the Romans and thereafter existed as a small municipal town in the dominion of Rome.

Unhappily little or nothing remains to-day of the Phœnician or Carthaginian settlement. The considerable remains we see are all of the Roman time: fragments of walls, parts of two temples, a paved causeway and traces of another road over the hill up to the town, capitals, columns and friezes, together with several cisterns for water. These, with some fragments of sculpture of considerable interest and beauty now in the Museum at Palermo, have earned for these desolate ruins the name of the "Pompeii of Sicily."

The road now becoming more and more picturesque, after Solunto enters the Bay of Himera, passing, after crossing the S. Michele torrent, the ruins of a great Norman church on a hill to the right called Chiesazza, founded in 1077 by Robert Guiscard; and presently one climbs up into the picturesque town of Termini Imerese.

This quite pleasant town, with a fairly good inn, is of course famous to-day as in antiquity for its warm saline springs, those "hot baths of the Nymphs" of which Pindar speaks. It was the successor of the more ancient city of Himera which lay on the other side of the Torto valley on the hills towards the sea between it and the Fiume Grande.

It is not perhaps worth any but the most eager traveller's while to seek out the site of ancient Himera, important though it was and the birthplace of the poet Stesichorus, for almost nothing remains on that steep and overgrown hillside nor on the plateau above it; only the remains of a Doric temple in the marsh towards the sea. Nevertheless, I walked out there, for I could not pass without going to see the spot where Gelon of Syracuse broke the Carthaginian armies on the same day in the same year as Salamis.

That great Greek city, the only Greek city according to Thucydides upon all the north coast of Sicily, stood above

IN THE MADONIF

the River Himera, now Fiume Grande, whence it received its name. It was a colony of Zankle (Messina), Chalcidic therefore, but it received also a number of Syracusan exiles and with them a Doric touch, and was founded according to Diodorus' calculation in 648 B.C., and here about 635 B.C. was born the poet Stesichorus whose lovely verses offended Helen of Troy, so that she blinded him till he wrote what is called the *Palinode*, a Recantation, when she restored him his sight. His poems were in the Doric dialect and according to Cicero there was a statue of him here, which was carried later to Termini, as an old man bending over a book. This, Cicero says, was a masterpiece of art and represented a man who dwelt indeed at Himera, but enjoyed through his genius a great and still living reputation in every part of Greece.

Almost nothing remains to us of his twenty-six books of verse, but among the fragments we find this, which is what, maybe, offended the divine Helen, for he tells "How Tyndareus one day in making sacrifice to all the Gods forgot the joy-giving Cypris; and in anger she caused the daughters of Tyndareus to be twice wed and thrice, and forsakers of husbands."

That was a very mild offence in comparison with some of the things that have been said of Helen by other poets. Lycophron, for instance, not only alludes to her three husbands but calls her the Ægyan bitch who bore only female children. But then this blasphemer calls Aphrodite the "old hag," so Helen need not mind.

I suppose every man has his own notion of Helen and very few will agree with our Chalcidian friend, if indeed it was he who wrote the *Alexandra*. She has always been and will always be the theme of poets: but no one has yet explained why Menelaus—seeing he was Menelaus—did not kill her when Troy was taken at last, amid all that blackguard butchery; but was reconciled with her and brought her home.

Was it her overwhelming beauty that saved her, or her essential innocence, the will of Aphrodite in her as the Greeks might have said? Or, after all, had she very little to do with the whole tragic business?

For instance: let me put what I mean in the form of a Mime by Sophron of Syracuse who invented Mimes, or by Herondas of Cos,—at least it will help to pass this rainy day at Thermæ.

THE FREEDOM OF THE STRAITS

"Now all the adventures of Odysseus stout of heart, I could not tell or number so many they were; but what a deed was that which he dared and did in his hardiness in the land of the Trojans, where ye Achæans suffered affliction. He subdued his body with unseemly stripes, and cast rags upon his shoulders, and in the guise of a beggar went into the ways of Troy, and the Trojans knew him not; only Helen knew him in that guise."—*Odyssey*, Book IV.

SCENE: *The lofty Acropolis of Troy, the Agora, from which, through a wooden port in the great wall, one may look over the plain to the Greek camp and the Hellespont. In the midst of the Agora is a fountain, upon the steps of which* ODYSSEUS *lies disguised as a beggar. It is dawn, and the townsfolk are coming to the fountain to draw water. They take no notice of the beggar; they are discussing the war.*

FIRST TROJAN. Ain't she worth it?

SECOND TROJAN. All this misery? I've lost two sons. . . .

FIRST TROJAN. *Ain't* she worth it? I reckon she's the best woman in the world.

(*Enter* HELEN *with* ANDROMACHE: *they pass through the Agora on their way to the gate to bid farewell to* PARIS *and* HECTOR. HELEN *looks at the beggar, but gives no sign of recognition. The crowd cheers and doffs its cap.*)

FIRST TROJAN. Ain't she *worth* it?

SECOND TROJAN. Well, perhaps so.

FIRST TROJAN. Ain't she the most beautiful woman in the world? Ain't she the *best* woman in the world? . . .

(*Enter* PARIS *and* HECTOR.)

PARIS. *I* don't know what she wants.

HECTOR. It is certainly very awkward.

PARIS. She's deceiving me. There's that Deiphobus. There's . . . I'm damned if I know what she means.

HECTOR. You surely can't mean you suspect her of . . . inconstancy?

PARIS. Can't I? I'll get rid of her. I'll send her back to Menelaus.

HECTOR. But *think* of the scandal! . . . This awful war. . . .

PARIS. Well, what of it?

HECTOR. But that's what we're fighting about.

PARIS. What?

HECTOR. Why, Helen!

PARIS. My dear chap! . . .

HECTOR. Well, isn't it? I don't want to hurt your feelings, but . . .

PARIS. So you still think the war is about Helen?

HECTOR. Well, what is it about? I know this is a scandal, but I don't see any chance of getting people to believe that the war is *not* about Helen. You carried her off, and . . . and there you are. Without being a pro-Greek you must admit . . .

PARIS. Rot. What chance is there for our future if the Greeks win? That's the point.

(*They go out talking. The Agora is now deserted save for the beggar, who still lies on the steps by the fountain. Enter* HELEN.)

HELEN. Odysseus!

ODYSSEUS (*gazing at her, trembling with terror, realizing that his life is in her hands*). Helen!

HELEN. Odysseus!!

ODYSSEUS (*still gazing and trembling*). But . . . but they told me you had become a *plain* woman!

HELEN. Odysseus ! ! ! How dare you say that to me ! (*He continues to gaze at her.*) But . . . I suppose . . . I must excuse you. After all, you were one of my suitors.

ODYSSEUS. Yes, and ever shall be. (*Then, with happy thought.*) That is why I couldn't keep away.

HELEN. Oh, Odysseus (*coming close to him and looking about*), how bored I am ! Bored ! Bored ! ! Bored ! ! !

ODYSSEUS. Bored ?

HELEN. Bored, bored, bored. Bored by the Trojans, by Paris, by Hector, by Andromache, by all Troy. Barbarians, barbarians, barbarians ! (*Throwing herself into his arms.*) Release me, deliver me, save me ! Take me back to my husband !

ODYSSEUS. But the war ? and . . . er . . . Paris ?

HELEN. Why did I ever leave Menelaus ? Why was I carried off ? He was far better than this. It was sometimes amusing at Lacedæmon.

ODYSSEUS. But surely you won't maintain that Menelaus isn't a bore ? Why the whole camp is bored stiff with him. I never met anyone who didn't find him an intolerable bore.

HELEN (*suddenly and eagerly*). Oh, he is, he is, he is. Isn't he ? But these barbarians ! Hector, oh my Odysseus, Hector ! !—and Andromache ! Ah, you don't know Andromache. The complete mother and housewife, I assure you. By the way, talking of that, how is Penelope, dear little Penelope ; little, little Penelope, like a dear, dear little dwarf ? Take me away, Odysseus (*throwing her arms about his neck*). Listen, my suitor, my sad, romantic suitor. . . . If you will take me away, if you will release me, you shall have . . . listen . . . (*whispers*) a kiss from the honey of my throat. Oh, Odysseus, you have always loved me. Give me back my respectability. (*Very seriously.*) *Nothing* is any good without that ; there's no *taste* in anything without that. Listen (*she sits on his knees, throws her arms about his neck and kisses his ear*), a kiss from the honey of my throat. (*Jumping up.*) How *dare* Paris suspect me !

ODYSSEUS. Suspect you ?

HELEN. Yes, he suspects me. Isn't it appalling, after

all this misery, this awful war, all for me, and for which shall never forgive myself?

ODYSSEUS. Well, as to that, you know, you are not wholly to blame. It had to come. The gods are responsible. It was their quarrel. The gods are about their immortal business. Providence . . .

HELEN (*offended*). It is very nice of you, Odysseus, to try to excuse me, but . . . I don't think you should blame Providence. After all, I *am* the source, I fear, of all this terrible affair, in which so many brave men . . . (*She turns away her head.*)

ODYSSEUS. Oh, come now, I can't see you crying. As a matter of fact, you know, gods or no gods, Helen or no Helen, the war had to come.

HELEN (*giving him her hand*). Ah, don't try to comfort me with lies. I know I am the whole dispute.

ODYSSEUS. As a matter of fact, not at all. It was really all about a trade-route.

HELEN (*furious*). A what?

ODYSSEUS. A trade-route. You see, old Priam, here in Troy, taxed our ships as they passed through the Straits to and fro the Euxine. Sometimes he'd hold them up, the old pirate.

HELEN. I know you are lying to comfort me, but I don't think it quite nice of you to suggest that the cause of all this fighting and the death of all these splendid men is a stupid thing like that.

ODYSSEUS. Stupid?

HELEN. Men like Hector and Achilles don't fight for trade-routes.

ODYSSEUS. No, but you know yourself how stupid they are—what barbarians. They will fight for anything, even honour.

HELEN (*in ecstasy*). *My* honour.

ODYSSEUS. Oh, for anything or nothing. Why Achilles is sulking in his tent now. What about, do you think? About a woman.

HELEN. I don't think it quite nice of you, Odysseus, to say that. Of course they are impossible, and who is this woman?—some slave, I suppose. But, after all, you

have been one of my suitors. You must have felt—you must feel—that I was worth fighting for. Why else are you here?

ODYSSEUS. I tell you the war is about a trade-route. You are only a pretext.

HELEN (*furious; throwing open the port, and pointing out over the plain, where the battle is joined*). A pretext! A trade-route! Do you tell me you are killing one another for such a thing? What? You, who have loved me? O shame! O horror! O men, men, what are you? I shall never understand you. (*Looking across the plain.*) How beautiful and how glorious! And, after all, for a woman, . . . one understands it. (*Slamming to the port.*) A trade-route! What will you get by your trade-route?

ODYSSEUS. Very little, perhaps. A little gold. . . .

HELEN. Bah—a little gold. Will you kill your son for a little gold?

ODYSSEUS. But it is the freedom of the Straits we . . .

HELEN. Will you risk your son for a little gold? Tell me, then, of your little son. Is he as pretty as ever?

ODYSSEUS. Telemachus was a pretty boy, was he not?

HELEN. Not half as pretty as he would have been had he been . . . mine.

ODYSSEUS. Ours! Helen. . . .

HELEN. Tst. Some one is coming. Lie down again till I can find a pretext to bring you into the palace.

CURTAIN.

. . . . .

It cannot have been long after Stesichorus' death that Himera fell into the hands of a tyrant Terillus, who for some reason of which we are ignorant quarrelled with Theron of Acragas, who expelled him from Himera. Terillus then made common cause with the Carthaginians, and this was the pretext for the great attack upon Greek Sicily which coincided with the Persian advance upon Greece proper. Both Hamilcar the Carthaginian here and Xerxes the Persian at Salamis were defeated it is said upon the same day in 480 B.C.

Theron then remained master and contrived after various revolutionary outbreaks to turn Himera, by the introduction of new colonists, into a Doric city ; this about 476 B.C. As such it supported Syracuse, with whom its relations had become close, in the Athenian Expedition of 415 B.C., refusing to receive Nikias, and welcoming Gylippus, the Spartan general, who landed here in his successful attempt to succour the besieged city. Indeed the greater part of the force with which he entered Syracuse was composed of Himeræan citizens. Its entry into this quarrel, however, was indirectly the cause of its final destruction. For when after the Athenian defeat the Segestans appealed to Carthage, Himera was the first city to be attacked and, as it happened, completely destroyed, by the Carthaginian expedition which answered that appeal in 408 B.C. Himera was taken by storm, a large part of the inhabitants were put to the sword and not less than 3,000 who had been taken prisoners were massacred in cold blood by Hannibal as a sacrifice to the memory of his grandfather Hamilcar who, when defeated here in 480 B.C., had, it will be remembered, cast himself into the fire before the altar of Moloch.

The total destruction of Himera followed, even the temples were not spared, and all trace of the city whose name was the name of the great Carthaginian defeat, was obliterated. In fact Himera was treated by Carthage exactly as Carthage was later to be treated by Rome. Thus time brings about its shameful revenges.

Himera was never rebuilt : but a new settlement was eventually established on the hill beyond the left bank of the river where there were certain hot springs which named the new town Thermæ—the modern Termini. So Himera continued : Thermæ in fact has never ceased to be inhabited.

The remains of the ancient city of Thermæ are considerable but all of the Roman period. Among them the most interesting are those of the ancient *thermæ* which are still used for their original purpose but are now known as the Bagni di S. Calógero. There are, too, portions of the Roman aqueduct and the Theatre which was described by

Fazello in the eighteenth century, but not a trace of which I could find to-day.

In the Museo Civico are conserved a few fragments both of Himera and of Thermæ, but the best sculptures found on these sites are in the Museum at Palermo. The Museo, however, is worth seeing not only for its classical, but also for its Arab and mediæval antiquities, while in S. Maria della Misericordia in Via del Monte there is a fine fifteenth-century triptych, over the first altar on the left, of the Madonna and Child enthroned, with S. John Baptist and S. Michael Archangel on either side and a predella, perhaps by Gaspare da Pesaro, and dated 1453.

The rain was gone. I left Termini on a bright morning and made my way eastward across the marsh on the great road to Cefalù. The Madonie Mountains rose up in massy far-away peaks and long crests to the south; on the north shone the sea, and ever before me was thrust out the great headland of Cefalù upon which, as I now began to see, stood a mighty church with twin towers, like some fantastic formation of the headland itself visible even from so far. It was already evening when at last I came into that city and found a room for the night in a rather sinister *osteria* in the Corso.

Early on the following morning I made my way along the narrow street to the great sloping Piazza closed at the top by the gigantic building which I had seen from so far. I might have been in Normandy: Cefalù might have been Caen and this great church S. Etienne of the Conqueror.

Here at any rate the Norman has built—and in Sicily—according to his own magnificence and simplicity. Here one might think Walter "of the Mill" has come into his own.

The church was founded by King Roger in 1131 in fulfilment of a vow, when, like Odysseus, off this coast on his way from Calabria he was in danger of shipwreck. His vow was that he would build a church wherever he got safely ashore. He landed here, and here in the very next year he began this vast Cathedral towering up under the sheer cliff, and, as it might seem really a part of it, its great towers but isolated pinnacles of its stone, its gaunt façade

but a part of its sheer face, its harsh weather-beaten height only isolated from the parent rock.

So it seems when first you stand and gaze up at it. But look more closely and everywhere you will discern in its great Norman framework details which suggest the Saracen and the Greek, who it might seem were, in the Sicily of that time, alone capable of building at all, or at any rate, such a work as this.

The church is a Latin cross, 230 feet long. The western front rises from vast blocks of hewn stone, a curiously simple, almost harsh, cliff of stone, with a great pillared portico receding between two huge square projecting four storied towers, as Norman as anything can be in Normandy or England. And yet how curiously mannered, how elaborate is that great western portal, how strange those lovely embattled turrets, windowed too, and one of them with a delightful pointed arcarding too elaborate and too delicate you might think for the North. The walls of the portico too they say were once covered with mosaic. Walk round the church: the huge central apse towering up between the two small apses north and south, the lofty transepts with their square ends, everywhere covered with a light arcading borne on slender round coupled shafts right up to the cornice, and again and again and again the pointed window: it is as though the gaunt Norman framework had been carefully overlayed and penetrated by a genius far other, lighter and more supple, delighting in beauty more than strength, in subtilty more than simplicity.

And within the secret is no longer a secret. The Norman is here scarcely discernible. The great nave is upborne by fifteen antique columns of granite and one of cipollino with Corinthian capitals, and everything is devoted to an effect of lightness and height, the church soars up almost like a Gothic building, and yet no Gothic church of the North ever had this effect of space, of light, of colour.

Of colour . . . The whole apse is marvellously encrusted with lovely mosaics, shining with gold, beautiful with all the colours of the rainbow. In the semidome is a gigantic bust of Our Lord in benediction—far lovelier than the similar figure at Monreale. Beneath is a figure of the Madonna,

and all about angels, saints and prophets, kings and warriors, bishops and judges.

These mosaics were executed, as the inscription declares, in the year 1148. They are thus the earliest in Sicily. Contemporary with them but certainly to-day, perhaps on account of restoration, inferior to them, are the mosaics of the Palatine Chapel. Better than these and perhaps equal to the mosaics of Cefalù are those of La Martorana, executed at about the same time ; while those at Monreale are altogether inferior.

No doubt here at Cefalù as in La Martorana the whole church was once covered with mosaics ; but only those in the semidome, the apse and the sanctuary now remain. The semidome, as I have said, is filled on a grey background with a colossal bust of the Saviour in benediction between four angels and medallions of Melchizedek and Hosea on the side walls. Beneath are the twelve apostles and beneath again the Blessed Virgin in the midst, with prophets, elders and saints. Nothing more glorious remains in all Sicily than these magnificent Byzantine works. Here Greek art, the Greek genius, manifests itself for the last time in a sunset of colour, of gold and precious stones, harmonious and lovely, and with its wonted genius for decoration. No other people has created great masterpieces across two thousand years : yet something like that separates the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus from the Cathedral of Cefalù : more than 1,500 years stand between the frieze of the Parthenon and these last Greek works in Sicily. The religion in whose service these works were made was more than a thousand years old when they appear to enlighten and adorn it : and they are, or should be, as enduring and indestructible as the work the Greek genius did in the service of the older religion. After all, nearly everything we know and feel in regard to both religions is their work in so far as it has any antiquity. Into what byways have we not wandered, in what squalor have we not dwelt, without them ; and always with nostalgia, and a continual attempt at return.

Little else in the church much concerned me. I noted the two thrones of marble encrusted with mosaics at the

TEMPLE C. AT SELINUNTE

CEFALÙ

entrance of the sanctuary, the one inscribed " Sedes Regia " the other " Sedes Episcopalis," and the beautiful twelfth-century font. Then I wandered out, and presently came into the beautiful but half ruined cloisters, only less lovely than those at Monreale.

Then I returned to the inn, which did not seem much less forbidding now at midday than it had done on the previous evening. After a wretched lunch I set out by the Vicolo dei Saraceni to climb to the summit of the great precipitous rock in the shadow of which the Cathedral stands.

There on the top of old was founded the Greek Cephalœdium, probably a fortress of Himera, certainly never a Greek settlement, which got its name from the headland (κεφαλή) upon which it stood. Diodorus speaks of it as just that, at the time of the Carthaginian expedition under Himilco in 396 B.C., and it appears in the Roman itineraries. Indeed it seems to have continued to exist, probably on account of its harbour, till Roger I built his Cathedral on the rocks below and transferred the inhabitants from their inaccessible height to the shelter of his great church.

Some remains of the ancient city reward one for a laborious climb, as well as a wonderful view of sea and sea-coast, island and mountain. And there are remnants of a Saracen cistern and a castle, as well as what was said to be the débris of a Temple of Artemis. But the most curious monument still remaining in that lofty place is a house or palace of more than one storey with various apartments built of large blocks of limestone in a style usually called Cyclopean. Rude mouldings rather Doric in character are hewn in these vast blocks and the whole makes a building of an absolutely unique kind. Is it Homeric? Is it Minoan, Mycenæan or Sicanian or Sikelian? Prehistoric it certainly is, perhaps the only house left in the Mediterranean from before the beginning of history. It certainly brings to the mind, one scarcely knows exactly why, the very atmosphere and life of the Odyssey. Over such a threshold Odysseus passed to sit unrecognized with the noisy suitors; in such a palace Penelope waited and wove; one almost expects to see the dog Argos peer round the great hewn door-posts looking for his master: under such a

tremendous lintel perhaps Athena herself has bowed her head. It intrigues one more than the Cathedral below and in so stony a place covers everything with those memories which are none the less for being only the memories of a tale that is told.

From that height, as I sat beside the threshold I looked out along the shore whither I was bound. Perhaps I was weary of the many miles I had come and saw those before me without the usual pleasure and expectation ; but it was the inn of Cefalù which really intimidated me. For I argued, if nothing but this wretched *osteria* is to be found in a place so famous as Cefalù, so frequented, so constantly visited from Palermo and with so much to offer the traveller, what is before me ? What must I expect to find in the little unknown places I had hoped to visit ? The thought had been with me all day. It was now necessary to face it.

I had set out determined to visit every site of every Greek city upon this northern shore which the Greeks called and rightly καλλάκτη, " the beautiful shore," the beautiful place where the waves break. I had numbered them all and had their names by heart ; from west to east they ran like a song :

Thermæ, Himera, Cephalœdium,
Apollonia, Alaesa, Amestratus,
Calacte, Agathyrna, Aluntium
Tyndaris, Mylæ.

It was a little lame it is true, but it served. Such were the cities of the north coast and all were to be seen, that is to say their sites were known, and modern towns still bore their names or at least represented them : as Pollina, Apollonia ; Mistretta, Amestratus ; Sant' Agata, Agathyrna ; San Marco d'Alunzio, Aluntium.

How was all this to be managed ? Well, it couldn't be managed. I was no longer a candidate as of old for native experiments in cookery ; I was no longer as once so enthralled by the dream in my mind, that I was rather unaware of, than indifferent to, the dirt, the vermin, the hostile curiosity of the inhabitants, which seem inseparable from every

archæological pilgrimage. I revolted, or rather I funked it, the daily effort to eat the uneatable, to sleep, to rest—where both were impossible, to face the suspicious curiosity of unkindly ignorance. So I shall never see Apollonia, Alaesa, Amestratus, Calacte; the beautiful shore I shall never tread; Aluntium, into which Verres refused to climb it was so steep, I shall never reach. Alas, why are there not what Baedeker used to call "tolerable" inns near all these places? "Tolerable" used to mean in Tuscany "delightful," a house undegraded by the tourist, unspoiled by parties of sightseers, an inn to keep in a secret corner of the mind, where your host gave you the local news in the evening, your hostess cooked a meal fit for Lucullus, and her daughters saw to your comfort. Clean? Cleaner I will swear than anything has been in England since the Spoliation, and cheaper than anything has been in England since the Conquest.

But here . . . I cannot face battalions of twinkling fleas, I cannot face vermin that move in mass formation. I am weary of goat: I am all for Arabian artichokes and Greek lettuces. I would not willingly pass the English turnip-top, no nor even the mere "greens" of my home. Why does Sicily know none of them—Sicily the home of Demeter, once the garden of the Mediterranean, the granary of Rome? But goat in all guises and disguises, and mostly plain plain goat—my gorge rises, I refuse . . . And so I took the train from Cefalù for Milazzo, the only town along this long and exquisite coast between Termini and Messina where Baedeker notes

ALBERGO E TRATTORIA . . . well spoken of . . .

Even from the train that coast I could see bore out its name: not a mile of it that did not call for admiration, sometimes as at Calcate itself, at Capo d'Orlando, at Brolo, at Capo di Calavà, at Tindaro and finally at Milazzo it seemed to beggar description in the late afternoon light, the sea changing colour every minute from sapphire through the tenderest blue to wine colour, to violet, to a cold grey when the sun was gone.

As for Milazzo it lies at the base of a low peninsula and

is all a garden. Nothing seems to remain of the old Greek city, but you may walk through olives and orchards and shrubberies of myrtle—*amantes litora myrtos*, as Virgil tells us—all the way out to the *lanterna* at the end of the low peninsula which is about five miles long, the violet sea breaking softly on both sides, and then look back at Sicily, at the coast beautiful, or forward at the floating islands of Æolus, lofty Vulcano, only 15 miles away, with its white feather of smoke, larger Lipari the capital of the archipelago, Isola Salina, which the ancients called Didyme the twins, because of its two cones of extinct volcanoes, Filicuri, which the Greeks called the palmy, Alicuri which they called the healthy, and Pinaria with its satellites. Altogether Milazzo is a jolly place where every tiniest bay has its name and every rounded headland too. The only thing one could have against it is that they have made a prison of Charles V's Castle, which occupies the site of the Greek acropolis : but stone walls could not a prison make in such a place as this and beside such a sea.

The Greek city of Mylæ stood on the base of this peninsula as Milazzo does. It was an establishment rather than a colony, I suspect, of Zankle (Messina), and was erected here where there is a good harbour to secure Zankle's communications upon the north coast. It was certainly founded before Himera in 648 B.C., but the first historical notice we have of it is found in 427 B.C. when it was attacked by the Athenian fleet then at Rhegium. It was defended by Messina but was taken. It never seems to have had any separate existence at all and its relation to Messina seems to have been much the same as that of Acræ to Syracuse.

The long peninsula forms the western headland of the fine gulf of Milazzo. This gulf is famous in history for two great actions. The first of these can hardly be called a naval action. It was a great fight at sea between the Roman fleet under Duillius and the Carthaginians, in the First Punic War, in which the Roman was victorious. It was a most astonishing result, for the Carthaginians were the finest sailors in the world and the Romans about the worst. Rome hated and feared the sea, therefore she

tried, and successfully, to turn a naval action into a land fight to her advantage. Even her sea-sick soldiers could fight on *terra firma*. On *terra firma* they fought. For the Roman artificers had contrived *corvi*—in other words, means, of holding and boarding the enemies' ships. It seems that in the forepart of the ship the Romans fixed perpendicularly a round pole 24 feet high ; at the top was a pivot upon which a ladder was set 36 feet long and 4 broad ; at the end was an iron spike, and the ladder was lowered by a rope so that it overreached the enemies' bulwarks and the spike was driven into the opposing ship. The enemy was thus held while across the ladder, or up and down it, the Roman " sailors " swarmed aboard the Carthaginian and fought it out in the waist. The *corvus* was thus a sort of magnificent grappling iron and boarding ladder. It gave the Roman the victory in this engagement, which goes to show that nothing is ever certain in war, which is an art and not a science, and a game of chance much more than an art. No one in the world at that time could have believed that the Romans would defeat the Carthaginians at sea ; nor would they ever have done so but for this very lubberly contrivance.

The second affair for which this bay is famous is a naval action between Romans : Agrippa, who commanded the fleet of Octavian, here defeated the ships of Sextus Pompeius, 36 B.C.

I determined to visit Tyndaris from Milazzo for I could hear of nowhere to sleep there ; and to make this excursion more delightful I determined to go by sea, getting a boat at the *tonnara*. It was a sail of some two hours or more across the bay in sight of that lovely shore under the great mountains of the Peloritan range.

Tyndaris is an amazing thing : a granite cliff a thousand feet high rising sheer out of the sea. You land in the ancient port beyond the Santuario della Madonna di Tindaro and scramble up the steep hillside to find the ruins of the old city wall, a wonderfully preserved Theatre, various mosaic pavements and other remains : altogether Tyndaris is one of the places most well worth seeing upon this northern coast.

Tyndaris gets its noble name from the Peloponnesians who were its first colonists. They named it in honour of their native divinities the Tyndaridæ, the Dioscuri, Castor and Polydeuces, the brothers of Helen of Troy. Thus Tyndaris was a purely Greek city, one of the latest, as it happens, to be founded in Sicily, having been established by the elder Dionysius in 395 B.C. after the failure of the Carthaginian attempt against Syracuse. The original settlers whom he established there were those exiles who had been driven from the Peloponnese by the Spartans after the close of the Peloponnesian War. These had first been placed at Messina, but as the Spartans objected to this, Dionysius transferred them to Tyndaris. They welcomed new colonists and very soon they numbered 5,000 citizens, and Tyndaris was thus a place of considerable importance. In fact its enormous strength must always have brought it into consideration. It might seem to occupy upon the Tyrrhene Sea much the same position as Tauromenium upon the Ionian, and upon one occasion we find Hieron in his attack upon Messina in 269 B.C. resting his position upon Tyndaris on his left and Tauromenium on his right. It was a strategic point of the first importance, and probably for this reason it enjoyed as long a life as Tauromenium, played a part in the Punic wars, was a considerable place in Cicero's time, was looted by Verres, is still alluded to by Strabo as a city, and by Pliny as a colonia, which suggests that it had received a colony under Augustus as we read too in an inscription : Colonia Augusta Tyndaritanorum. It is Pliny, too, who tells us of the calamity which fell upon the city, the results of which are in some sort still visible. He declares that half of it was swallowed up by the sea, and to-day you may still see where the ruined walls end abruptly above the sheer face of the cliff, here split, perhaps by an earthquake, and a vast part hurled into the sea.

I had toiled up that steep hillside in the hope of finding, as in so many other places in Sicily, Greek ruins. I found none. Ruins there were in plenty and of considerable interest, but they one and all proved to be of the Roman time, even the Theatre being, like

that at Taormina, at best a Roman work upon Greek foundations.

Still I was able to trace the walls of the city; I went by the roads that once upon a time the exiles from the Peloponnesian Chersonese must have used, I passed in and out of the two gates, I stumbled about the many ruins among the cactus and myrtles and wondered what that might be which has two fine stone arches and is obviously of the Roman time. It resembles, or rather it reminds one, of the Roman amphitheatre at Syracuse. I lingered in the Theatre.

This is not a large building: according to Baedeker its internal diameter is 212 feet. It looks smaller. The *theatrum* proper is divided into nine *cunei*, and there were at least twenty-seven tiers of seats. But as usual the stage is gone. Indeed I begin to doubt the existence of the stage. I wonder whether Sophocles has ever been played here? I should doubt it. We know that under the Romans even the Theatre of Dionysus at Athens was the scene of gladiatorial shows: the Romans were barbarians and, except the few, had little taste for Greek literature. They were themselves totally incapable of producing a tragedy, and even their epic poetry is slavishly imitated from those whom they conquered it is true, but who were their masters in all the finer things of life, in art as in philosophy. Probably here in this beautiful place above the sea the crowd was used to make a Roman holiday . . .

I eluded such thoughts as these by scrambling up to the *Telegrafo* and it was there I took farewell of Sicily.

Before me, sleeping on the Tyrrhene Sea, lay the Æolian Isles, from smoking Vulcano close at hand to smoking Stromboli far away, lying off the Italian shore: islands of the winds, the floating isles, past which the Nereids bore in their white hands Jason's Argo, to which Odysseus came to beg for a wind to bear him home. To the north-east, closing the wide bay, lay the long low peninsula of Myle, that was called the Island of the Sun and all the fair shore between. To the west stood up the Capo di Calavà under Monte Pezzecatori and higher still Monte Giojosa. Behind me rose the Mountains of Neptune, before them the mighty Rocca di Novara; and there far to the south, hovering in

the sky, appeared the ethereal snow-crowned cone of Etna, 10,000 feet in the blue air.

Night came swiftly, as it were in a moment, as we sailed across the Bay of Tyndaris, back to Milazzo. And on the morrow I was in Messina, and not without many a backward look, embarked for home.

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